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THE POETRY OF AIME CESAIRE AND DEREK WALCOTT: TOWARDS A NATIONAL CARIBBEAN LITERATURE

by

(C) BARTHA MARIA KNOPPERS

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Poetry of Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott: Towards a National Caribbean Literature," submitted by Bartha Maria Knoppers in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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ABSTRACT

What distinguishes the poetry of Aimé Césaire and Derek Walcott from the other poets of the Caribbean and, indeed, from the contemporary poets of France and England, is the historical function they impart to their poetry. The magnitude and urgency of this function, be it Césaire's protest or Walcott's search for self, is dependent on the historical circumstances in which the poet finds himself. Drawing on the past that shaped the Caribbean and the resulting unique cultural and social heritage, they have revitalized the past in its relationship to the present in order to suggest a new future. The historical character of their poetry stands in contrast to the pre-1940 poetry of the Caribbean which was assimilationist and imitative in nature, finding its style, content and purpose in the literature of the colonizing power. The poetry of Césaire and Walcott draws on the history of the Caribbean itself, creates its originality through the poet's native experience and yet ultimately is made more striking by its universally significant content, which outlines a framework of development for other emerging national literatures.

The object of this thesis is to trace the growth of Caribbean poetry as represented in its two major poets, through the three synchronic stages of imitation, protest and search for an identity, in which a definition of a national literature will be demonstrated.

The preparation of a thesis would be solely a labour of scholarship were it not for the inspiration and example of those who guided and shaped my thoughts in my attempt to effect in some small way the reality I describe. In this respect, I would like to thank Professor Gary Warner of McMaster University in Hamilton and Professor Steve Arnold for their personal interest and sharing of experiences and thoughts on Third World literature- a philosophy of the purpose of literature that shaped the ideas of this thesis. I would also like to thank Professor E.D. Blodgett and Professor P.A. Robberecht for their help and constructive advice that enabled me to complete this thesis. Of course any creative work needs the understanding and trust of those closest to oneself and so I especially thank my family and Don, my husband, for their patience and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

The terms "West Indian", "Caribbean" and "Antillean", are used interchangeably in most discussions of the literature of the Caribbean area. For the purposes of this study, the term Caribbean will be used to refer to the French and English speaking islands of the Caribbean Sea. Any reference in this study to the West Indies will be concerned with the writing from those islands where English is the official language and the chief medium of composition. The same is true for the Antilles where the official language is French. The literature of the mainland territories, Spanish and Dutch posessions and the island of Haiti will not be dealt with due to the extent of such a topic. Moreover, their history and therefore their rate of national literary development is at variance with that of the other colonies.

The long poem, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal[1] of Aimé Césaire (1913-) of Martinique and the long poem, Another Life[2] of Derek Walcott (1930-) of St. Lucia, will be the object of this study. They stand at present at the apex of an emerging Caribbean national literature, which first became such about 1940. The history and development of poetry within this emerging national literature will be studied against both their native Caribbean and European adopted (imposed?) literary traditions.

The evolution of an emerging national literature can be characterized by its gradual unfolding on three levels. Janheinz Jahn,[3] Frantz Fanon[4] and other African and Caribbean literary critics have outlined their own views on the stages of national literary development. Based on my

research of the literature of the Caribbean written in English and French, there appear to be three distinct, synchronic periods of literary development: a colonial or assimilationist period, a period of protest literature and finally the gradual emergence of an indigenous national literature.

During the first stage of this development, the colonial period, writers from the colonies place themselves strictly within the literary tradition of the mother country. Their acceptance and worth as writers is directly related to the exactness with which they can imitate and reproduce the current literary ideal, whether the style, content and structure relate to the homeland or not. This cultural servitude stands in a dialectical relationship to the existing social, economic and political dependence.

Any change in the political or social order, then, brings an incumbent pressure to bear on the cultural sphere. It is within this time of unrest and political ferment that the second stage appears. Within this protest period the following themes become prominent: a search into the past, a desire to rewrite their history, a revitalization and demystification of the past, a renewed militancy, a social and political commitment on the part of the artist and a search for a form in which to express their revolt.

This second period of protest literature leads to and participates in the final stage--the creation of a national consciousness and literature. A literature is created which can support and continue the protest tradition while at the same time develop art forms that demonstrate the historical uniqueness and individuality of its culture and people, while at the same time reaching a universal plane in order "to become the mouthpiece of a new reality in action."[5]

The use of local colour and subject matter, landscapes, vernacular

speech and structure contribute to this development. Most important of all, the writer turns his attention to the historical, social, political and economic forces shaping the culture and identity of his people. The interaction of these factors creates a living heritage of material and situations to be personally examined and artistically interpreted for his people.

What is important in this study is not only to examine Caribbean poetry as exemplified by Césaire and Walcott against the established French and English literary traditions, but to identify what may become the permanent landmarks of this emerging national literature. This literature, while exhibiting a strong local texture is universal in its concerns, especially as it relates to other Third World countries. Rather than pursue the spurious quest for European traces and influences, both poets will be examined in the light of what purposes these influences served, how they were filtered through the Caribbeanizing process, and were welded to the poets' individual talent, to bring forth a unique Caribbean poetry.

Literature does not develop or grow in a vacuum. It is given impetus, concern, direction and shape by the political, social and economic forces existing in a given society. The simultaneous interpretation of literature through and by these forces gives truer insights into the nature of literature and its extra-literary context. Yet ultimately, it will be seen that it is not solely the individual linguistic, cultural, geographical, racial or political factors that are the final determinants of a national literature. These factors by themselves are subject to the historical process that influences their development and their effect on a given literature. The realization by a people of a common history and

of its continuation in the present is the cohesive force uniting the other factors into a distinct, historically aware and history-shaping literature. The historical processes from which a people is shaped and its expression in literature, together with a consciousness and belief in themselves as a separate nation will finally determine the creation of a national literature.

Sylvia Wynter in an article entitled "Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism" makes a distinction between the "aquiescent" critic who pretends to take an objective stance outside the historical process which has moulded his point of view and the "challenging" critic. The latter accepts and is aware that his point of view is moulded by historical process. Such awareness on the part of the "challenging" critic can lead to creative insights which, by transforming the nature of consciousness, can transform the historical process. The "challenging" critic can help to initiate conscious change, while the "aquiescent" critic, by pretending to be objective, bolsters the status quo even when he most seems to protest against it.[6] "Challenging criticism seems to me to relate the books discussed to the greatest possible 'whole' to which they belong. Aquiescent criticism either refuses to do this... or relates it to a background which is mythical rather than real."[7]

The structural organization and form of criticism applied to Césaire and Walcott in this thesis does not separate them from either their particular Caribbean situation nor from the European context that influenced it. It is Césaire's and Walcott's awareness of their unique history and its determinants--"the 'whole' to which they belong" that forms their poetry. To apply "aquiescent" criticism to these two

authors would be a misinterpretation of their fundamental purpose in writing itself. "Challenging" criticism places their poetry into its context and creatively and critically examines its birth. Césaire's and Walcott's poetry, which are representative of two synchronic periods of an emerging Caribbean literature, will be examined in the light of such "challenging" criticism.

I

Colonial Poetry in the Caribbean

> Des pâmoisons, du bleu, des ors, du rose. C'est gentil. C'est léché. De la littérature? Oui. Littérature de hamac. Littérature de sucre et de vanille. Tourisme littéraire...[1]
>
> Suzanne Césaire (1941)

After three centuries of colonization, the French and English could make no claim to an indigenous literary achievement. G.R. Coulthard in Caribbean Literature: An Anthology describes the pre-1940 literature as "provincial, imitative and slipshod."[2] Lilyan Kestleloot in Les Ecrivains noirs de langue française writes, "Nos recherches nous amenent ainsi à la conclusion qu'avant Légitime Défense [1932], il n'y avait effectivement aucune littérature originale aux Antilles."[3] What caused this imitative style and what were its characteristics?

The historical background of the Caribbean up to the nineteenth century, shows a rather homogenous pattern of "discovery", conquest, extermination of the native population, its replacement with slave labour from Africa, growth of the plantation system and the eventual emancipation of the slaves in 1938 in the British West Indies and 1948 in the French

Antilles.

As a result of the total denigration of their race and origins, the descendants of the slaves had but one desire: to assimilate and identify with the other, the White. Numerous black revolts attest to an unbroken spirit of independence on the part of the slaves and their descendants. This qualifies the quest for assimilation without negating it. Nevertheless, European ways of life and literature for lack of a white Creole became the respectable norm. England and France were firmly institutionalized as the educational and cultural focus.

This attitude manifested itself in eighteenth century verse that was at once patriotic in content and derivative in style. An example of this is the Latin panegyrics of Francis Williams, a freed coloured man whom the Duke of Montagu educated to see if he could be as "capable of literature"[4] as an educated white man. One of his Latin odes written to George Haldane, the governor of Jamaica in 1759 has been translated into verse as follows:

> Manners unsullied, and the radiant glow
> Of genius, burning with desire to know;
> And learned speech, with modest accent worn,
> Shall best the sooty African adorn.
> An heart with wisdom fraught, a patriotic flame,
> A love of virtue; these whall lift his name
> Conspicuous, far beyond his kindred race,
> Distinguish'd from them by the foremost place.[5]

William's total incorporation of the European attitude towards his race was the natural result of an environment where England was viewed as the place of values. England was seen as "home" by the black, mulatto and white settlers. This attitude was directly related to the tri-fold colour hierarchy of the Caribbean where things African and black were correspondingly devalued. The mulatto prided himself on his white English,

ancestry. This rigid hierarchy of colour was the result of the relaxation of moral and ethical standards for the amusement of the colonizer, accompanied by more restrictive civil laws. The white English settlers attempted to be doubly English from nostalgia and a fear of losing their identity. Their quick profiteering concerns led to a high degree of emigration and absenteeism on their part, rather than social reform or the promotion of native cultural institutions.

1834 saw the creation of the Jamaica Quarterly Journal, whose literary section was used as a means of "conveying information about books in-the-news at home."[6] These attempts to recreate a London society where the settler would be the upper crust reflected a sense of vogue and a certain self-consciousness: "In general, they avert their gaze from the Negro, from the great distinctive (and disturbing) fact of their way of life, and from all the consequent problems. For a long time, indeed, this was to remain a characteristic of all Caribbean verse."[7]

This lack of concern for the Negro is evident in this poem by James Grainger, a white physician living in St. Kitts. In 1802 he wrote a West Indian Georgic entitled, "Sugar Cane" which begins as follows:

> What soil the cane affects; what care demans;
> Beneath what signs to plant; what ills await;
> How the hot nectar best to crystallize;
> And Afric's sable progeny to treat:
> A Muse, that long hath wander'd in the groves
> Of myrtle indolence, attempts to sing...
> When first your blacks are novel to the hoe,
> Study their humours: some soft soothing words;
> Some presents; and some, menaces subdue;
> And some I've known, so stubborn is their kind,
> Whom blows, alas! could win alone to toil.[8]

It might be observed as an aside that Vergilian imperial attitudes adapt very readily to such historical situations as eighteenth and nineteenth century Caribbean life. The reluctance of the upper class to face the

moral degradation caused by their promotion of the colonial system and their resulting moral irresponsibility can be explained as follows:

> But in verse, the sense of the horror of slavery, the voice of protest, the awareness of the compromise of human dignity seldom claim the writer's attention. The reticence seems to stem from a desire to avert attention from the grim realities of life on the islands so as not to unsettle the illusion of creating in the West Indies a replica of polished London society... So, litrary aspirants withdraw from their immediate environment to a distant and receding reality, and refuse to confront their own actuality that cried out for honest assessment and humanistic appraisal. The resulting strain of triteness and 'secondhand' mentality were to affect West Indian verse for a long time to come.[9]

One of the cultural results of this attitude was the Barbados Gazette to which settlers were encouraged to submit verse that was light, frivolous and free from politics, such as epigrams or verse resembling the society verse of Pope and Thompson's Augustan England. In the latter part of the nineteenth century the personal lyricism of the Romantics was exchanged for an affirmation of the temperament of the mother country rather than that of the Caribbean.

During the middle of the nineteenth century tentative attempts were made to insert some local colour and flavour into the poetry of the Caribbean. Poems began to record the native vegetation and landscape. Rather than producing a more locally conscious poetry however, the authors saw their islands through European eyes. They adopted an exotic and idyllic attitude towards their own tropical landscape. Their homeland was described in an ornamentative and Romantic style. The native flora and fauna were used for purposes of emotive description only. No attempt was made to confront as individuals their own particular situation as the Romantics had done. Dr. M.J. Chapman, a Barbados

physician and a white creole wrote in a Wordsworthian style in 1833,

> 'Twas there from Nature's book- sea, earth, sky,
> I learned the heart's mortality.[10]

The verse from the French Antilles followed the same pastiche pattern of development. There we find:

> ... une affligéante culture simiesque dont la littérature antillaise avant 1930 donne une parfaite et constante illustration: les seules oeuvres de valeur sont le fait de Blancs creoles en parfait accord avec eux-mêmes et chantant les îles telles qu'ils les voient et les éprouvent... rêveries élégiaques dans une nature accueillante... ils chantent avec ferveur les beautés du terre-antillais. S'accepter soi-même est la condition première de l'écriture, rien d'étonnant dès lors qu'au-delà des oeuvres blanches, la littérature abondamment répandues par les noirs et mulâtres martiniquais ou guadeloupeens, pastichant le Parnasse, le Symbolisme, le Décandetisme, etc., de la Métropole nous laisse une immense lassitude, le dégoût d'une éphemère vanité.[11]

Imitating the Parnassian vogue in its cult of external form and material beauty, John-Antoine Nau of Martinique (1860-1918) wrote:

> La houle molle des cocotiers sur les Açores
> La rythmique floraison
> Dans la brise des madras multicolores
> Sur les tiges des corps balancés.[12]

It is generally agreed that the eighteenth and nineteenth century produced poetry of little value. This was due to the servile and mediocre reproduction and the selective imitation. Lest they be judged too severly, it must be understood that the circumstances and its arbitrary cultural and social impositions left room for little else. In his Introduction to the Literature of the Commonwealth[13] A.L. McLeod points out that: "The absence of a native... literature before the beginning of this century may be attributed to the prevalent materialism of an essentially

commercial-minded society, to the absence of any local institutions of higher education and to absenteeism on the part of the upper class-- but essentially to the absence of any national consciousness."[13]

An awareness of the native environment first appeared in the early nineteen hundreds. This awareness did not extend itself beyond enamoured descriptions of their native setting but it did reflect a genuine love and discovery of their homeland. Tom Redcam MacDermott (1870-1933), a native Jamaican, wrote this poem of longing for his "Little Green Island" while in an English nursing home:

> A Little Green Island, in far away seas!
> Now the swift Tropic shadows stride over thy leas;
> The evening's Elf-bugles call over the land,
> And ocean's low lapping falls soft on the strand.
> Then down the far West, towards the portals of Night,
> Gleam the glory of orange and rich chrysolite.
> Day endeth its splendour; the Night is at hand;
> My heart growth tender, dear, far away land.[14]

No longer was there a split loyalty or talk of England as "home". The style remained derivative but the sentiments had found roots in its birth-place. This discovery of the native natural setting and the land of birthright can be seen as one of the first steps towards the creation of a national consciousness and literature. James Fenimore Cooper performed the same primary service for American literature.

The West Indian writers of this early period included J.E. Clare McFarlane who founded the Poetry League of Jamaica, Adolphe Roberts, Vivian Virtue, M.G. Smith and Frank Collymore among others. Their poetry brings to mind Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats but bereft of revolutionary content.[15] Hampered by problems of publication and native appreciation, their poems however feeble in imagination and imitation, did not reach a wide native audience. Among their weak villanelles, imitations of the

decadents, patriotic verses and odes (in abundance during the Great War), however, there are a few poems reflecting the beginnings of a national consciousness and pride of homeland. They restricted themselves to using a more natural description and local names. A manifestation of this sense of local surroundings is Vivian Virtue's, "I Have Seen March."

> I have seen March within the Ebony break
> In golden fire of fragrance unsupressed;
> And April bring the lignum-Vitae dressed
> In dusty purple; known pale rust awake
> The Mango's boughs; the Poinciana take
> Immortal wound of Summer. I have pressed
> The Cassia's spendthrift yellow to my breast:
> I could love Earth for one tree's royal sake...[16]

Obviously the literary sensibility is still English. As Louis James indicates: "They are using for their models Wordsworth, Rossetti, Tennyson, Swinburne. They do not take into account that a different technique is needed to cope with the different Caribbean situation, with its distinct complex of colours, the subtly different pronunciation and speech rhythms, the absence of such central English themes as the contrasting seasons, and the presence of Caribbean natural rhythms, flat heat, hugely silent night, hurricane, drought."[17]

This love for romantic idyllic description in both the French and English colonies is a tradition still carried on by many Caribbean poets today. Gilbert Gratiant of Martinique, typifying the longevity of this form of poetry wrote in 1957,

> Coffre à baisers
> Colibri du tourisme
> Bijou géographique...[18]

René Maran of Martinique sang the beauties of his homeland while living in France, demonstrating the problem of writers writing from the metropolitan centers of France and England who, while freely neglecting the

sordid reality, dwelled on sweet memories:

> Ah! toute la douceur de ma petite enfance
> Ces languissantes nuits du port de Fort-de-France
> Paradis végétaux
> Enchantez-moi longtemps du jeu de vos prestiges.[19]

The lingering popularity of dated European styles is evident in this extract from a poem by Gilbert de Chambertrand of Guadeloupe written in 1937.

> Midi! L'air qui flamboie, et brûle, et se consume,
> Verse à nos faibles yeux l'implacable clarté.
> Tout vibre dans l'espace et sur l'immensité;
> L'azur est sans nuage et l'horizon sans brume.[20]

This purely Parnassian style echoes the French poet Leconte de Lisle, who wrote one century earlier:

> Midi, roi des étés, épandu sur la plaine,
> Tombe en nappes d'argent des hauteurs du ciel bleu.
> Tout se tait. L'air flamboie et brûle sans haleine;
> La terre est assoupie en sa robe de feu.[21]

Lacking the financial and literary encouragement to develop their own style and influenced by their classical education, they understandably relied on metropolitan approbation as the criteria for success. As a result, their poetic form and content, while national in terms of setting and allegiance, did not reflect the prevailing social conditions but promoted the existing colonial system at the expense of the people. Presenting a pittoresque exterior, it demonstrated the depersonalization and alienation of the native writers who could only mimic and view themselves through European eyes. Writing in the language of the elite class, they promoted an abstract and objective form of writing, lacking both personality and a conscious criticism of their surroundings. This cultural servitude prompted Aimé Césaire to write a fitting summary of all pre-1940 poetry, in the first issue of his review Tropiques (1944): "Point d'art. Point de poésie. Ou bien la lèpre hidieuse des contrefaçons."[22]

II

From Surrealism to Césaire: The Poetics of Negritude

> A true Copernican revolution must be imposed here... so much is rooted in Europe, and in all parties, in all spheres, from the extreme right to the extreme left, the habit of doing for us, the habit of arranging for us, the habit of thinking for us, in short the habit of contesting that right to initiate, which is in essence the right to personality.[1]

In 1932, Etienne Léro, a student from Martinique studying in Paris, published a manifesto that served as one of the catalysts of the négritude movement. Its invective and denunciatory tone epitomized a new generation of writers who, scorning the servile imitations of their forefathers, demanded nothing less than the tabula rasa of Eurocentric literature:

> The West Indian, crammed full of white morality, white culture, white education and white prejudices, displays the puffed-up image of himself in his little books of verse. The very reason for his entire social and poetic existence is to be a faithful copy of the pale-skinned gentleman... 'You're acting like a Negro!' This is his indignant accusation whenever you give way in his presence to any natural exuberance. In his poetry too, he tries not to act like a Negro. He takes special pride in the fact that a white man can read his book without ever guessing the colour of his skin... The foreigner can go through all this literature vainly looking for an original or meaningful accent,

> never finding a trace of the black man's sensuous and colourful imagination or the echo of the hatreds and aspirations of an oppressed people.[2]

This vituperative accusation marked the appearance of a new racial and self-awareness on the part of black writers the world over. Their protest was an affirmation, an assertion of oneself and one's people against the external, imposed reality and the internalized self-image that resulted. This expression of their search and their anger at the realization of their near cultural extinction, took the form of what came to be known as protest poetry. It can be seen as a tradition in-as much as protest is common to the literatures of the Third World and is a necessary step towards national liberation. The forms vary according to the needs of the particular people and their history. In Latin American literature it was called indianismo, in Haitian and Cuban literature, indigenism, and in African and neo-African literature, négritude. There were many factors contributing to the appearance of protest poetry in the Caribbean.

In the West Indies, the amount and forcefulness of this poetry was very little and weak. Comparatively speaking they had a less odious history of slavery and colonialism than the French Antilles. The same distinction can be drawn with regard to the Anglophone and Francophone writers in Africa.[3] The divide-and-rule policy of the British lent itself to more tokenistic participation and individual expression.

The leading West Indian poet Claude McKay did not begin to write his protest poetry till he migrated to the United States where he is now considered part of the Afro-American movement. Before migrating he had

written dialect poems close to the folk tradition and West Indian in language and feeling. To some extent his West Indian heritage of such oral forms as the protest songs and work songs of the plantation, combined with his experiences in Harlem, produced such militant poetry that he can be regarded as the forerunner of Caribbean protest poetry. Written in the vein of the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's, this poem intitled "Enslaved" contains the basic themes of protest poetry: the review of the past, the forming of a racial identification, the resistance to an imperialist domination, the reaction against an exploitative and depersonalizing, bourgeois social system and the resulting liberation from conventional forms of identity, thought and expression:

> Oh, when I think of my long-suffering race,
> For weary centuries, despised, oppressed
> Enslaved and lynched, denied a human place
> In the great life line of the Christian West;
> And in the Black Land disinherited,
> Robbed in the ancient country of its birth,
> My heart grows sick with hate, becomes as lead,
> For this my race that has no home on earth.
> Then from the dark depth of my soul I cry
> To the avenging angel to consume
> The white man's world of wonders utterly;
> Let it be swallowed up in earth's vast womb,
> Or upward roll as sacrificial smoke
> To liberate my people from its yoke![4]

George Campbell, another Jamaican, saw the need for a new cultural and racial point of reference and sought to establish a spiritual relation with Africa. In this excerpt, the longing for Africa coexists with love for his homeland:

> She sings of the African womb
> Everlasting above the tomb
> She sings of her island Jamaica
> She sings of the glory of Africa.[5]

The hope of reunion with the tribe and the ancestors in death had been a popular theme of much Caribbean poetry in the late nineteenth and

early twentieth centuries but never exalted and idealized in the present as a contrast to their own surroundings. Before, the past had been something to be ashamed of. All one could hope for was the reunion in the after-life. This attitude is evident in Vera Bell's "Ancestor on the Auction Block":

> Ancestor on the auction block
> Across the years your eyes seek mine
> Compelling me to look
> I see your shackled feet
> Your primitive black face
> I see your humiliation
> And turn away
> Ashamed...[6]

The back-to-Africa movement of the Jamaican Marcus Garvey, the Rastafarian movement[7] and the European interest in primitivism and the African primordial helped to change this attitude:

> Picasso, between 1900 and the outbreak of the First World War, was imitating African sculpture. American 'Rag time' jazz was invading Europe in the years immediately following the war. Stravinsky in 1919 published his piano rag music. O'Neill's Emperor Jones (1920), and All God's Chilluns Got Wings. Blaise Cendrar's Anthologie Nègre (1927), André Gide's Voyage au Congo (1927). All these works point to a current fashion for Negro art, or at least an interest in the Negro and his ways. Perhaps most important of all is the work of Leo Frobenius on African cultures.[8]

Campbell's poetry also reflects the cultural and political (Marxist) influences on Caribbean writers following the First World War:

> I dreamed
> Jesus kissed Lenin on the lips
> For the Russian Revolution.
> I dreamed
> Jesus walked the streets of Petrograd
> Among the workers...[9]

The percentage of intellectuals emigrating for a higher education to Europe was increasing and had a direct bearing on the future of West

Indian verse. Not only were they influenced by European trends but their increased communication among themselves created better relations between the islands. Up until this time the spirit of parochial insularity among the islands was highly developed. While in the colony they may have believed themselves to be full citizens of the Empire, their experiences overseas taught them differently, forcing a search for their roots and identity. The European influences of Marxism and surrealism provided a political and literary background for their protest. This background of developments and influences indicates the historicity of the authors themselves, as they became aware of the existing reality of the Caribbean and the history that shaped it.

Other than Claude McKay and George Campbell, the West Indies produced little in the way of protest poetry in the early part of the twentieth century. The almost total spiritual and cultural extermination by the European colonial system demanded a rectification stronger than this, a voice that would help the Negro to rebuild himself from the imposed sense of nothingness. In the West Indies free men of colour remained tied to a culturally impotent form of literature. Their protest was not widely heard or accepted. It remained for Aimé Césaire of Martinique to fulfill what Richard Wright, a black American writer postulated as the role of the Negro poet:

> The Negro writer who seeks to function within his race as a purposeful agent has a serious responsibility. In order to do justice to his subject matter, in order to depict Negro life in all of its manifold and intricate relationships, a deep, informed, and complex consciousness is necessary; a consciousness which draws for its strength upon the fluid lore of a great people, and moulds this lore with the concepts that move and direct the forces of history today; ... a new role is devolving

> upon the Negro writer. He is being called upon to do no less than create values by which his race is to struggle, live, and die...[10]

The Theme as Protest:

Aimé Césaire's Cahier d'un retour au pays natal first appeared only in fragments in the review Volontés (1939) and went almost totally unnoticed till André Breton met Césaire in Martinique in 1941. A second copy prefaced by Breton appeared in 1945. It finally appeared in its entirety as late as 1956.

Although Jean-Paul Sartre in his "Orphée Noir", hailed it as "la seule grande poésie révolutionnaire"[11] and Breton in his introduction lauded his voice, "belle comme l'oxygène naissant"[12], this most powerful of the Caribbean poets and first singer of négritude, is still relatively unknown, outside of Africa, the Caribbean and those interested in the literature of the Third World. His Cahier and later poems actualize the protest of all subjugated peoples who struggle to rid themselves of imperialism of any form. It was Césaire who awoke the Caribbean from its colonial slumber to the realization of its true status: "Mon nom: offensé; mon prénom: humilié; mon état: révolté; mon âge: l'âge de la pierre."[13] And Césaire who warned, "... je pousserai d'une telle raideur le grand cri nègre que les assises du monde en seront ebranlées."[14]

The long poem Cahier d'un retour au pays natal, written upon his imminent return to Martinique from his studies in Paris in 1938, contains the main tenets of all of Césaire's poetry. Moved by a sense of

injustice and anger at the European colonial machine, he faced the grim socio-economic realities of his homeland island, Martinique. He demystified the idealized Africa and the history of his race, realized his own complicity and commited himself away from personal violence to a universal struggle. Out of this self-liberation emerges not only a commited Césaire but the framework of decolonization necessary to achieve a new consciousness.

The Cahier opens with Césaire's realistic description of his native island Martinique. Gone are the exotic, touristic eyeglasses that saw only:

> ... des madras aux reins
> des femmes des anneaux à leurs oreilles
> des sourires à leurs bouches des enfants
> à leurs mamelles... (p. 85)

It is dawn, the time of revelation and the camoflauging has disappeared, revealing the sickening reality of:

> ... les Antilles qui ont faim. Les Antilles grêlées de petite vérole, les Antilles dynamitées d'alcool, échouées dans la boue de cette baie, dans la poussière de cette ville sinistrement échouées... (p. 31)[15]

Instead of the balmy, palmy islands Césaire sees them as:

> Iles cicatrices des eaux
> Iles évidences de blessures
> Iles miettes
> Iles informes... (p. 133)

Describing the poverty, misery and vices of the masses and the lickspittle subservience of the coloured middle class, he remembers his own childhood on the shameful "rue Paille." (p. 35) The loss of self, and the denigration have left a people who never have the desire to stand up and protest.

Moving on to another dawn, the dawn of Europe, he remembers his

visions of himself as a poet who would sing and be all things for his people.

> ... un homme juif
> un homme-cafre
> un homme-hindou-Calcutta
> un homme-de-Harlem-qui-ne-vote-pas
>
> L'homme-famine, l'homme-insulte... (p. 57)
>
> ... Et si je ne sais que parler, c'est pour vous
> que je parlerai. (p. 61)

He warns himself not to adopt,

> ... l'attitude sterile du spectateur, car la vie n'est
> pas un spectacle, car une mer de douleurs n'est
> pas un proscenium, car un homme qui crie n'est pas un
> ours qui danse... (p. 63)

Yet such grandiose ambitions were not to be fulfilled in a society wherein such grandeur is impossible. His singular heroic aims crumble before the day to day failure and misery he sees, a way of living ressembling death. Has he been called to serve only "... ces quelques milliers de mortiférés qui tournent en rond dans la calebasse d'une île"? (p. 65) No, his is the entire Negro race, for there isn't "Un bout de ce monde qui ne porte mon empreinte digitale." (p. 67)

Facing the true history of his race, "... l'Europe nous a pendant des siècles gavées de mensonges et gonflés de pestilences..." (p. 139), he turns to protest against his oppressors and spews out his hatred for their values:

> Parce que nous vous haïssons vous
> et votre raison, nous nous reclamons de la
> démence précoce de la folie flamboyante
> du cannibalisme tenace (p. 73)

Having reached such depths in search of himself and his people, he forces "la membrane vitelline qui me sépare de moi-même... C'est moi rien que moi qui prends langue avec la dernière angoisse" (p. 87, 89)

and realizes that "l'exotisme n'est pas provende pour moi." (p. 89)

He cannot forget his history of bloodshed and suffering but his useless dreams have faded during the enumerating of his true history.

> Non, nous n'avons jamais été amazones du
> Dahomey, ni princes de Ghana avec huit cents
> chameaux, ni docteurs... ni docteurs... ni Madhis,
> ni guerriers... je veux avouer que nous fûmes
> de tout temps d'assez piètres laveurs de vaisselle,
> des cireurs de chaussures sans envergure... (p. 97)

His former idealization of Africa, its civilization and himself dims in this process of demystification as he remembers his own complicity on a Paris tram. Seated across from a Negro worker on the tram Césaire adopting the attitudes of those about him, laughs at the other Negro's awkward size, his extreme poverty and his ugliness.

> Et l'ensemble faisait parfaitement un nègre
> hideux, un nègre grognon, un nègre mélancholique,
> un nègre affalé, ses mains réunies en prière sur
> un bâton noueux. Un nègre enseveli dans une vieille
> veste elimée. Un nègre comique et laid et des
> femmes derrière moi ricanaient en le regardant.
>
> Il était COMIQUE ET LAID,
> COMIQUE ET LAID pour sûr.
> J'abordai un grand sourire complice...
> Ma lâcheté retrouvée! (p. 105)

Now he proudly sings the non-accomplishments of his race, "... ceux qui n'ont exploré ni les mers, ni le ciel mais ceux sans qui la terre ne serait pas la terre." (p. 115)

Out of respect for his history of blood, slavery and extermination, he will not ignore the martyrs of his past when bargaining for peace with the world. The work of universal liberation has only begun. He will start with his own deformed islands, and his challenge is their healing. Nevertheless, he foresees, a "... place pour tous au rendez-vous de la conquête..." (p. 141) He lashes out at "la négraille" that says, "... ne

faites pas attention à ma peau noire: c'est le soleil qui m'a brûlé." (p. 143) He cheers on the progressive death of this form of "négraille." His forceful négritude delivers himself and his race "à l'essence de toute chose." (p. 117) It is not a passive resignation but a call to combat.

Decolonized man now stands upright and free. Césaire has given him "le poing dur" (p. 101) of protest but also the "fraternité âpre" (p. 155) of a universal liberation from oppression. The cause of liberty is not confined to the Caribbean. Throughout the years this universalism of Césaire has guided his poetry, plays and speeches:

> ... La cause de l'homme est une, ... la cause de la liberté est indivisible, et... chaque fois qu'il y a un Vietnamien qui tombe, chaque fois qu'il y a un Malgache qui est torturé, chaque fois qu'il y a un Juif qui est insulté, chaque fois qu'il y a un nègre qui est lynché-- il y a un morceau de la civilisation universelle qui s'écroule et une fletrissure imprimée sur la joue de l'humanité...
>
> Tuez donc tout ce qui divise les hommes, et surtout réveillez à toute injustice la conscience des hommes, alertez-la, ameutez-la contre l'oppression où qu'elle s'étale, contre l'esclavage où qu'il sévit.[16]

The Form as Protest:

> Mais je ne suis pas un surréaliste parisien.[17]

Having expressed his protest through the proclamation of his négritude, Césaire defined his négritude as, "la simple reconnaissance du fait

d'être noir, et l'acceptation de ce fait, de ces conséquences culturelles et historiques."[18] He sought to express this "l'être-dans-le monde du nègre"[19] in a form that actualized its being.

Etienne Léro's manifesto printed in the only issue of Légitime Défense in 1931, had far reaching repercussions among the West Indians and Africans living in Paris. Rising above the tribal and regional lines that had heretofore divided them, it awakened these black intellectuals trying to find themselves in a troubled white society. Léro not only denounced the assimilation of the blacks but proclaimed surrealism as the only artistic method to rediscover their authentic identity and a Marxist revolution as the means to economic equality.

Two years later, Léopold Senghor of Senegal, Léon Damas of French Guiana and Aimé Césaire of Martinique founded the review L'Etudiant Noir in which they attempted to formulate a new credo for the Negro race through discussion and debate. As Senghor remarked, "It was in Paris on the heels of the ethnologists, that we rediscovered négritude, which is to say the cultural values of the African-Negro civilization: the gift for emotion and instinctive feeling, the gift of rythm and form, the natural talent for image and myth, community spirit and democracy."[20]

The influence of the ethnologists and the Harlem Renaissance on the black writers has been stated before. Ultimately it was the questioning of moral, artistic and political traditions by writers such as Rimbaud, Mounier, the Dadaists and the Surrealists, that broke the literary barricades barring a full expression of their search and protest. Surrealism embodied more than a school, a literature, a movement or a liberation of form. It hailed a new interpretation of life:

Le surréalisme n'est pas un moyen d'expression nouveau

> ou plus facile, ni même une métaphysique de la poésie; Il est un moyen de libération totale de l'esprit et de tout ce que lui ressemble. Nous sommes bien decidés à faire une Révolution.
> ...
> -Le surréalisme n'est pas une forme poétique. Il est un cri de l'esprit qui retourne vers lui-même et est bien decidé à broyer déséspérement entraves, et au besoin par des marteaux matériels!
>
> -Déclaration du 27 janvier 1925[21]

In freeing his unconscious, it claimed for man the freedom from the conventional, stultifying modes of seeing and experiencing the world. These egalitarian and revolutionary characteristics made it "les armes miraculeuses" in Césaire's combat against assimilation--a medium true to his view of man and the world.

It is not possible or necessary to pinpoint the individual authors and their works whose influences are discernible in Césaire's Cahier. The literary rating by European critics of Caribbean writers according to their successful copying of the en vogue mode of writing of authors in Europe, has been detrimental to the development of national literatures. Therefore this current method of literary criticism should not be promoted. This Eurocentric form of scholarly endeavour belittles the creative efforts of Third World writers expressing themselves in a colonial language. It is well known that the pressure of metropolitan approbation and subsequent assurance of publication, forces many writers overseas to these centers. To commend these writers means not only to discover their use of European elements but most important of all, their use, transformation and transmutation of their own local raw material--their native voice. The occidental influence is important mainly insofar as it served as a source of inspiration. The relationship between protest-négritude and surrealism, its similarities and differences would be more valuable than pinpointing

individual influences, since it was the form and ideology of surrealism as a movement, not its individual authors, that made it an instrument of protest.

European critics were quick to claim Césaire for the French surrealists but only after Breton "discovered" him in Martinique in 1941 and Sartre's subsequent "L'Orphée Noir" in 1946! Furthermore, it is interesting to note:

> ... that Breton first recognized and then encouraged Césaire's surrealism. But that he was not the cause of it is quite simply proved by historical circumstances... poems... clearly surrealistic, appeared in Tropiques (1941) before Breton ever met Césaire. Moreover, Breton knew Césaire for only two months before moving on to the United States. A brand new style is not assimilated in so short a time... between these two men there was an encounter, mutual admiration, but no influence.[22]

Breton in his introduction to the Cahier qualifies his statement that one cannot distinguish, "... en essence, sa volonté de la mienne,"[23] by praising Césaire's power of negation, of song, of transmutation and most of all his death blow to the power of reason, of common sense. These lines of affinity drawn up by Breton between Césaire and surrealism demonstrate quite a distance from the psychic automatism, omnipotence of the dream and the free, disinterested play of thought techniques of his 1924 manifestos! The Cahier does show some use of the surrealist technique, but it is not a purely surrealist poem. Césaire's closest affinities with surrealism occurred during World War II, when subject to the Vichy regime, the racial harassment and economic privation caused by the European influx and a naval blockade of the island, the hermeticism and automatism of surrealism served to create a language code wherein his resistance could be safely expressed.

Césaire explains his relationship to surrealism this way:

> ... Et bien sûr, je suis surréaliste. J'accepte absolument la tutelle surréaliste... Mais je ne suis pas un surréaliste parisien! Le surréalisme, je l'ai mis au service d'autre chose... je suis Péléen... Tous les Martiniquais savent ce que c'est que la Montagne Pélée. C'est une montagne qui est considérée comme éteinte, bon, depuis très longtemps et qui se manifeste rarement, mais quand elle se manifeste, elle se manifeste avec violence. C'est l'explosion, c'est le type explosif.[24]

His affinities with surrealism are in the area of the ideology of liberation and in his use of surrealist techniques such as his use of language and verbal images, magic, heuristic exploration, synthesis, and the sublimal search. He avoided their practice of simulations, games, automatism, humour-noir, paranoia-critique and objective chance. The above mentioned "tutelle surréaliste" that Césaire does accept is evident in the following examination of the Cahier. It is however the native, "Péléen" explosions coming from the depths of his country and race that give his language the power of actualization, forcing European surrealism beyond itself:

> En Césaire la grande tradition surréaliste s'achève, prend son sens définitif et se détruit: le surréalisme, mouvement poétique européen, est dérobé aux Européens par un Noir qui le tourne contre eux et lui assigne une fonction rigoureusement définie... L'originalité de Césaire est d'avoir coulé son souci étroit et puissant de nègre opprimé et de militant dans le monde de la poésie la plus destructrice, la plus libre et la plus métaphysique, au moment où Eluard et Aragon échouaient à donner un contenu politique à leurs vers...[25]

The language of the Cahier is a testimony to Césaire's control over the French language. In discrediting its culture he turns its language against itself. The conventional French syntax and semantics reel under the flow of new verbal images and associations. Césaire forges a language of his own using the native names of plants and animals, creating new

words to express his emotion, combining African philosophy and culture to make a rich vocabulary--an expression of the force of life.

The word has magical powers and can create what it invokes. "Signifié" and "signifiant" are one!

> à force de penser au Congo
> je suis devenu un Congo bruissant de
> forêts et de fleuves
> où le fouet claque comme un grand étendard
> l'étendard du prophète
> où l'eau fait
> likouala-likouala
> où l'éclair de sa colère lance sa hache
> verdâtre et force les sangliers de la
> putrefaction dans la belle orée violente
> des narines.
>
> (Cahier, p. 75)

He combines "l'alchimie du verbe" of Rimbaud and the magical powers and forces of the muntu and his nommo.[26] The unification of "signifié" and "signifiant" results in a liberation of language and man.

To achieve this liberation of language and thus his people, he reaches into his most unconscious depths. This sublimal technique common to the surrealists attempted to unify the internal with the external, to achieve the exteriorization of desire:

> Puis je me tournais vers des paradis
> pour lui et les siens perdus, plus calme que
> la face d'une femme qui ment, et là, bercé
> par les effluves d'une pensée jamais lasse
> je nourrissais le vent, je délaçais les monstres
> et j'entendais monter de l'autre côté du
> désastre, un fleuve de tourterelles et de
> trèfles de la savane que je porte toujours
> dans mes pronfondeurs... (p. 29)

The release of these subconscious forces opens Césaire's eyes to his island and his people and the disparity between the dream and reality. In the prose passages that follow, images and adjectives of defeat, disease, and humiliation accumulate to emphasize an aphasiatic and alienated society.

Similar to the surrealist method of collage and frottage in their freedom from conventional connections, Césaire's images are not joined by chance but by necessity to describe a defeated environment:

> ... muette, contrariée de toutes façons incapable de croître selon le suc de cette terre, embarassée, rognée, réduite, en rupture de faune et de flore. (p. 33)

> ... de lèpres, de consomption, de famines, de peurs tapies dans les ravins, de peurs juchées dans les arbres, de peurs creusées dans le sol, de peur en dérive dans le ciel, de peurs amoncelées et ses fumeroles d'angoisse. (p. 35)

> Ici la parade des risibles et scrufuleux bubons, les poutures de microbes très étranges, les poisons sans alexitère connu, les sanies de plaies bien antiques, les fermentations imprévisibles d'espèces putrescibles. (p. 41)

Cesaire's choice of words is not fortuitous, a surrealistic "jeu" determined by coincidences and absurdities, but an "enjeu", a concrete protestation. Avoiding the abstract, they become instruments of thought, emotion, and action:

> Au bout du petit matin ces pays sans stèle, ces chemins sans mémoire, ces vents sans tablette.
> Qu'importe?
> Nous dirions. Chanterions. Hurlerions.
> Voix pleine, voix large, tu serais notre bien, notre pointe en avant.
> Des mots?
> Ah oui, des mots! (p. 71, 73)

The style is imperative and commanding as it awakens the dormant subject matter. The experimental method of the surrealist has no place here:

> voum rooh oh
> voum rooh oh
> à charmer les serpents à conjurer
> les morts
> voum rooh oh

à contraindre la pluie à contrarier
les raz de marée
voum rooh oh
à empêcher que ne tourne l'ombre
voum rooh oh que mes cieux à moi
s'ouvrent. (p. 79)

Mocking the European attitudes towards his people, he personifies a cosmic dementia to exaggerate his "perversité." (p. 77) Like the surrealists, he opposed the sterile rationalism that separated man from a complete integration of desire and actuality:

Parce que nous vous haïssons vous et
votre raison, nous nous réclamons de la
démence précoce de la folie flamboyante
du cannibalisme tenace

Trésor, comptons:
la folie qui se souvient
la folie qui hurle
la folie qui voit
la folie qui se déchaîne. (p. 73)

This incantory, imperative style gains its force and violence with the use of the natural images of the island:

nous chantons les fleurs vénéneuses
éclatant dans les prairies furibondes;
les ciels d'amour coupés d'embolie; les
matins épileptiques; le blanc embrase-
ment des sables abyssaux, les descentes
d'épaves dans les nuits foudroyées
d'odeurs fauves. (p. 83)

The rhythm of Césaire so closely tied to his emotions, drones and awkwardly stumbles in the prose passages as the past drags up from his subconscious, the true history and complicity of himself and his people. After his anger at the defeatism of his people and the oppressive colonial system, the cataloguing of failures, of endured cruelty and injustice, of "lactification", he realizes the "vaillance rebondissante" (p. 107) of his people. Rather than adopt the nihilism of the Dadaists, his negativism in the listing of the non-accomplishments of his people,

Ceux qui n'ont inventé ni la poudre ni la
boussole
ceux qui n'ont jamais su dompter la vapeur
ni l'électricité
ceux qui n'ont exploré ni les mers ni le ciel

acts as a form of protest and recognition for those who, "savent en ses moindres recoins le pays de souffrance." (p. 111) Having reached such depths of suffering, his anger abates and he frees his people

... qui se sont assoupis aux agenouillements
ceux qu'on domestiqua et christianisa
ceux qu'on inocula d'abâtardissement

with

tams-tams de mains vides
tams-tams inanes de plaies sonores
tams-tams burlesques de trahison tabide. (p. 111)

The defeated reality of Martinique, their past African and slave history, the false myths of Europe -- all has been revealed and the two realities are joined in the present. As Breton remarked in another context, "Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable and the incommunicable, high and low ceased to be perceived as contradictions."[27]

The beauteous "spark",[28] the result of this fusion, fires off contagious, surrealistic images, achieving the synchronicity of the two states -- the concretization of the dream:

vienne le colibri
vienne l'épervier
vienne le bris de l'horizon
vienne le cynocéphale
vienne le lotus porteur du monde
...
il y a sous la réserve de ma luette une bauge
de sangliers
...

les herbes balanceront pour le bétail vaisseau
doux de l'espoir
le long geste d'alcool de la houle
les étoiles du chaton de leur bague jamais vue
couperont les tuyaux de l'orgue de verre
du soir
puis répandront sur l'extrémité riche de ma
fatigue.

(Cahier, p. 113, 115)

His négritude born of this dialectical synthesis,

... n'est pas une pierre, sa surdité
ruée contre la clameur du jour
... n'est pas une taie d'eau morte
sur l'oeil mort de la terra
... n'est ni une tour ni une cathédrale

elle plonge dans la chair rouge du sol
elle plonge dans la chair ardente du ciel
elle troue l'accablement opaque de sa droite
patience. (p. 117)

More than "une crise de conscience" of surrealism, it is "une prise de conscience." The alien, defeated, prose reality has been liberated by the "verbe-parole" of the surreal and creates the "... parfait cercle du monde et close concordance!" (p. 119) The African belief in the cosmic connection between all powers and all living things, the existential unity of man, nature and the magic of the word has been achieved: "La réconquête d'une unité primordiale qui, dans tous les domaines de la vie, fait cruellement défaut aujourd'hui, reste plus que jamais à l'ordre du jour. Le surréalisme, parce qu'il n'a pas eu de plus constant mobile d'action que la recherche de cette unité perdue, peut jouer un rôle important dans le conflit actuel."[29]

The frenetic magic of the sorcerer Césaire has exorcised the alienation and imposed inferiority of his people, who now hear:

... le monde blanc
horriblement las de son effort immense
ses articulations rebelles craquer sous les
étoiles dures

ses raideurs d'acier bleu transperçant la
chair mystique...
(Cahier, p. 119)

The role of the sufferer has been reversed. Césaire, however, refusing to nurture the white rationalist versus the black "soul" dichotomy sees his négritude as "no more than a springboard to action and the emotional rooting into the past as a source of strength for future social and political revolt."[30] This is evident in his prayerful canto for active reconstruction, joyful reunification and humble acceptance, of a universal struggle.

Faites-moi commissaire de son sang
faites-moi dépositaire de son ressentiment
faites de moi un homme de terminaison
faites de moi un homme d'initiation
faites de moi un homme de recueillement
mais faites aussi de moi un homme d'ensemencement
...
Mais les faisant, mon coeur, préservez-moi
de toute haine. (p. 123)
...
c'est pour la faim universelle
pour la soif universelle
la sommer libre enfin
de produire de son intimité close
la succulence des fruits. (p. 125)

Césaire's tone is one of grandeur throughout the poem, alternating between anger, violence and humbleness. This grandeur coupled with the liberating surrealistic images and forceful rhythm prevents his poetry from succumbing to the common didactic, propagandistic form of protest. His protest not only liberates man in an intellectual or political form of transfusion but makes possible a spiritual and social rebirth as well. It unites: "... mon pays et moi, les cheveux dans le vent, ma main petite maintenant dans son poing énorme..." (p. 139)

For the surrealists the language of the subconsciuous was

universal. Breton in his Le Message Automatique stated,

> Le propre du surréalisme est d'avoir proclamé l'égalité totale de tous les êtres humains devant le message sublimal, d'avoir constamment soutenu que ce message constitue un patrimonie commun dont il ne tient qu'à chacun de revendiquer sa part et qui doit à tout prix cesser très prochainement d'être tenu pour l'apanage de quelques-uns.[31]

This universal language unites the oppressed and makes future action possible. Going beyond this egalitarian philosophy of surrealism, Césaire adds a political thurst and sends out the call for action: "... il reste à l'homme à conquérir toute interdiction immobilisée aux coins de sa ferveur et aucune race ne possède le monopole de la beauté, de l'intelligence, de la force." (p. 139) This revelation of the cosmic laws that govern the world make possible an effective transformation of it, by allowing the outer world to synthesize with the inner, with desire and with poetry:

> Where else but in the free-verse form liberated from artificial rhyme and meter, could the French-speaking Negro find so natural a medium for articulating his view of himself and the world? Poetry became the esthetic vehicle for his revolutionary spirit. Here alone, in soaring, pulsating rhythm could he cry out his rage, sing his nostalgia, satirize a white world... [and] celebrate... his invincible faith in the brotherhood of man and the future of his race.[32]

As a consequence of such a view of poetry, "il-est-beau-et-bon-et-légitime-d'être-nègre"! (Cahier, p. 153)

In the vertical vision of freedom that ends the Cahier, the continuity of time, the reconciliation of the past and future is realized. Césaire while watching the dove rise to heaven remains to fight the false myths and racial injustices. The reunification of time, of man and of history has been achieved through his form of protest-négritude. For him, surrealism necessary to liberate the unconscious and the internalized

self-image of his race, is more than a revolutionary, egalitarian form of expression, or a personal exploration. It is the expression of a protest and a commitment, both personal and political, to a society in need of economic and social liberation.

III

A Twentieth Century Middle Passage

> Great and irrevocable changes have swept this land of ours in the last few years, and out of these changes a new art is springing.[1]
>
> -Edna Manley (1948)

The social and political upheavals in the West Indies in the 1930's and the creation of a policy towards self-government in the 1940's fostered the growth of a national consciousness. This nationalist ferment was reflected in the literature of the area. The political agitation and violence can be related to the economic depression of the 1930's but they cannot be separated from the Pan-African and Negro protest movements of the twentieth century, nor from the effects of popular education: "There was definitely a connection in the British Caribbean between the awakening of a national consciousness and a desire of independence and the burgeoning of a new national literature, which set itself higher standards than those hitherto accepted.[2]

In the 1940's this literature was still in its infant stages but the necessary climate for its growth was created by the appearance on the

market of West Indian periodicals such as: Focus (1943) in Jamaica, Bim (1942) in Barbados and Kyk-over-al (1945) in British Guiana. Not only did these journals publicize the writers of the region and bring them together but they offered outlets and critical appraisals for their poetry. This expansion and consolidation continued in 1946 with the first overseas broadcast of the Caribbean Voices program on the B.B.C., edited by Henry Swanzey. Besides its critical function, it offered the writers the promise of cash and a literary future in England, a future not possible in the West Indies.

The contributors to these periodicals experimented in the use of dialect as a literary medium, drew on the semi-African folklore tradition, posed the problem of social and racial adjustment,[3] renewed their relationship with the tropical landscape and promoted the use of rhythms deriving from the calypso and the Jamaican mento.

Louise Bennett's dialect poems became one of the best expressions of Caribbean popular culture and at the time of their first appearance symbolized the break with the approved, conventional English norms and style. While her use of dialect[4] can be amusing, the underlying statements are serious in their portrayal of the inner life of the ordinary people and in their illumination of both individual and national character.

This excerpt from one of her poems entitled "In Reverse", points out the problem of migration from the West Indies to England by people from all walks of life in the hopes of a better socio-economic future:

> What a joyful news, Miss Mattie
> I feel like me heart gwine burs'
> Jamaica people colonizin
> England in reverse.

By the hundred, by de t' ousan
From country and from town
By de ship-load by the plane-load
Jamaica is England boun'.

Dem a pour outa Jamaica,
Everybody future plan
Is fe get a big-time job
An' settle in de mother lan'.[5]

Evan Jones' "Lament of the Banana Man" exposes the resulting alienation and homesickness:

I'm here in Englan', I'm drawing pay,
go [sic] to the underground every day-
Eight hours is all, half-hour fo' lunch,
M' uniform's free, an' m' ticket punch-
Punchin' tickets not hard to do,
When I'm tired o' punchin', I let dem through.

...

I have summer clothes, an' winter clothes,
An' paper kerchiefs to blow m' nose.
My yoke is easy, my body light,
I know a place I can go to, any night.

...

... Gal, I'm tellin' you, I'm tired fo' true,
Tired of Englan', tired o' you,
I can' go back to Jamaica now-
But I'd want to die there, anyhow.[6]

The calypso tradition initiated by the African slaves as a satire of their masters, continued and served as a news carrier and commentary on any situation. Rooted in the speech rhythms and idioms of the people, it concerned itself with their problems, as this extract from a calypso directed against the British during the struggle for independence evidences:

I must be very frank and say
I was very glad when Sir Hollis went away
He cared only for his own employment
And did nothing to help us find employment...[7]

Its main influence on West Indian verse was a rhythmic one as seen in Edward Braithwaite's "Jour-vert":

Bambulai Bambulai
Bambulai Bambulai

But the sorrow
Turn to ashes
Grey rocks
Melt to pools
Of lashes'
Sweat and flowers
Bloom along the way
Bambulai Bambulai.[8]

The work of Leo Frobenius, Delafosse and others had served to portray the history of African civilization as much greater than the popular myth of the cannibal-savage, thus focusing attention on his denigration. In this excerpt, reference is made to this proud history:

Across the sand I saw a black man stride
To fetch his fishing gear and broken things,
And silently that splendid body cried
Its proud descent from ancient chiefs and kings...
... swept up within his arms
The broken nets and careless lounged away
Towards his wretched hut...[9]

The poets now revealed the existing conditions which no longer could be ignored:

This is a long, forbidding road, a narrow,
hard aisle of asphalt under
a high gothic arch of bamboos.
Along it a woman drags a makeshift barrow
in slanting rain, and thunder:
a thin woman who wears no shoes.[10]

The mixed racial origins of the native Caribbean and the tropical landscape are symbolized in "The Maroon Girl":

I see her on a lonely forest track,
Her level brows made salient by the sheen
Of flesh the hue of cinnamon. The clean
Blood of the hunted, vanished Arawak
Flows in her veins with blood of white and black...
Her woods are hung with orchids; the still flame
Of red hibiscus lights her path and starred
With orange and coffee blossoms in her yard...[11]

All of the above representative poets drew their themes from the social, racial and political environment of the West Indies progressing from

a colonial to an independent status. Their concerns were with general problems and with the creation of a new West Indian awareness and literature expressed through a liberated form and native content. The realization, that the middle passage across the Atlantic, the centuries of racial and social intermixture and the Caribbean environment had created a chasm that could not be crossed, formed the Caribbean imagination:

> This journey, within and out, this reciprocity of action between the writer and his immediate neighborhood; this ambiguity set up by the presence of the past and its origin in another landscape, whether it be Africa, Asia or Europe, all have produced in the West Indian imagination a very special awareness of exile combined with the peculiar restlessness and detachment that accompany it. It is impossible to overestimate the influence that this crisis of identity exercises in every sphere of behaviour in the colonized politics and education of the West Indian: self-contempt, lack of confidence, and an organized hypocrisy of superiority assumed by the educated elite as a way of protecting its own assimilation from the contagion of ignorance and blackness of those who are seen to be beyond the reach of the civilizing virtues of an imperial tutelage.[12]

But the question must be posed: "Who am I?". In order to discredit Western culture and civilization, Aimé Césaire distinguished the Negro culture from the white in negative terms, erased his mythologized past and reassessed his value in larger human terms in order to leave him, as he wrote in his Cahier: "debout /et /libre." (p. 149) Now that his protest had begun, the process of self-discovery and fulfilment was engendered. Derek Walcott exemplifies and fulfills this search for a Caribbean identity--the third step towards an emerging national literature, following assimilation and protest.

His is not the luxury of the twentieth century existential search for identity, a luxury afforded to those whose "basic needs" have been

met. According to the theoretical analysis of modern psychologists such as Rollo May, Eric Fromm and Abraham Maslow, the breakdown of traditional values and moral authority in our technological, urbanized society has created a vacuum, a need to belong, to have the freedom to act, to make decisions and choices while at the same time it suffers from a fear of the responsibility of such self-actualization. The void however, that Walcott fills is particular to the Caribbean, or any area where the imposed mixture of races and cultures have led to a personal search for identity resulting from such a heritage.

The Theme as Identity:

> So shall I voyage no more from home: may I speak here.[13]

Derek Walcott, the most outstanding West Indian English poet, completed Another Life in 1973. Like the Cahier, it is a long single poem. Unlike the Cahier, which symbolizes the awakening and protest of the Negro race and all oppressed peoples, this poem is a private dialogue of self-inquiry. It is this honest self-examination, however, that epitomizes the search for a meaningful identity in the Caribbean. Walcott's concern is with the present, the pursuit for a personal hold on reality. The deeper he probes within himself, the more universal he becomes. In his acquired self-knowledge he unifies the various fragments shaping the syncretic Caribbean character. Focusing on the inner landscape, he at-

tempts to solve the ambiguities and paradoxes unique to the Caribbean situation, but the honesty of his self-examination and its avenues of search are universally significant. As O.R. Dathorne observes, "The search for identification is most interesting and universal when it is not a racial theme at all, but the private quest of an individual in an alienated world."[14]

Another Life is divided into four chapters: "The Divided Child", "Homage to Gregorias", "A Simple Flame" and "The Estranging Sea". Through his personal experiences expressed in this poem, he outlines the process of cultural decolonization necessary to combat the prolongation of neo-colonialism in the Caribbean even after independence. Basic to this process are certain themes which first appeared scattered throughout his earlier poems. Since this poem follows his experiences and thoughts in a chronological order from childhood on, he demonstrates more clearly than any other Caribbean poet the multi-faceted forces that impinge upon the Caribbean character.

The central themes of all his poetry reveal these multiple strands that shape the West Indian consciousness: the socio-economic deprivation, the dual heritage that has resulted in a fracture of personality, cultural ambivalence and a sense of estrangement and of exile, the search for roots and identity, the intimate relationship between the island and its people, the search for a personal, rather than imperialist, history and literature and finally the relationship between art and life. Most important of all is his final realization that these concerns culminate in his struggles and revelations and that he and other Caribbeans must now turn to the creation of the present.

Walcott now in his forties, opens Another Life with remembrances of

his childhood. Subject to the racial prejudices, pigmentocracy and colonial education of the Caribbean,

> ... he'd considered palms
> ignobler than imagined elms,
> the breadfruit's splayed
> leaf coarser than the oak's
> he had prayed
> nightly for his flesh to change,
> his dun flesh peeled white by her lightning strokes!
> (Another Life, p. 6-7)

Then upon reading George Campbell's poem "Holy",

> Holy be
> the white head of a Negro,
> sacred be
> the black flax of a black child... (p. 7)

it seemed to him, "another life would start again." (p. 7)

Both Walcott and Césaire in their recollections of their childhood, remember the semi-poverty of their middle class backgrounds. Walcott recalls his widowed mother who took in sewing to make ends meet:

> Maman,
> only on Sundays was the Singer silent. (p. 11)

This situation is similar to Césaire's, "... je suis même réveillé la nuit par ces jambes inlassables qui pédalent la nuit et la morsure âpre dans la chair molle de la nuit d'une Singer que ma mère pédale, pédale pour notre faim et de jour et de nuit." (Cahier, p. 53) and aligns both poets with the reality of economic deprivation and hardships of the Caribbean. Negroes are the majority but the capital is in the hands of a white English minority.

The search into his dual heritage illuminates the opposing influences that formed it. The school master's question, "Boy! Who was Ajax?" (Another Life, p. 16) makes him recall the sacking of Troy by the Grecian heroes and simultaneously his own native heroes in Castries, St. Lucia:

These dead, these derelicts
that alphabet of the emaciated,
they were the stars of my mythology.(p. 22)

Torn between his Methodism and his African roots, he sees how his people too, while members of a church, continue to cling to their obeah man and his magical powers.

The cloven hoof, the hairy paw
despite the passionate, pragmatic
Methodism of my infancy,
crawled through the thicket of my hair,
till sometimes the skin prickled
even in sunshine at "negromancy";
traumatic, tribal,
an atavism stronger than their Mass,
stronger than chapel, whose
tubers gripped the rooted middle-class,
beginning where Africa began:
in the body's memory. (p. 24)

Furthermore, the poeple of Castries are pictured in "Egyptian bondage", subject to maltreatment and disease of every sort. In his bitter description of,

Sancta Lucia,
an island brittle
as a Lenten biscuit, (p. 35)

he mocks the detachment of the church and the social welfare officials:

'And what is hell, my children?'

Qui côté c'est l'enfer?
Why, Father, on this coast
Father, hell is

two hundred shacks on wooden stilts,
one bushy path to the night-soil pits... (p. 37)

...

Bilharzia enters the intestines of small children,
a sort of river tsetse, mines, in the guts,
in labourers, producing lethargy. 'We cure it,'
said the young research scientist,
'and multiply the unemployment problem.' (p. 39)

As "divided child" (p. 41) in search of heroes, he was surrounded with

Keats, tales of the True Cross and yet still yearned "for some ancestral tribal country" (p. 42) till one day, "... he fell in love with art and life began." (p. 44)

The second chapter "Homage to Gregorias", recalls his artistic apprenticeship and friendship with Dunstan, whom he rechristened with the Greek name, Gregorias,

> because you painted our first, primitive frescoes,
> because it sounds explosive,
> a black Greek's! A sun that stands back
> from the fire of itself, not shamed, prizing
> its shadow, watching it blaze!
> You sometimes dance with that destructive frenzy
> that made our years one fire. (p. 152)

Immersed in art and alcohol, they had sworn,

> that we would never leave the island
> until we had put down, in paint, in words,
> as palmists learn the network of a hand,
> all of its sunken, leaf-choked ravines,
> every neglected, self-pitying inlet
> muttering in brackish dialect... (p. 52)

Their's was "Adam's task of giving things their names", (p. 152) to write, to paint, its roots, its history, its life.

> For no one had yet written of this landscape
> that it was possible, though there were sounds
> given to its varieties of wood;
> ...
> whole generations died, unchristened
> growths hidden in green darkness, forests
> of history thickening with amnesia, (p. 53)
> ...

Through his intimate relationship to the landscape, to nature, he is blessed as the apostles were on Pentecost, with the ability to write all of its languages, all of its peoples. Yet "every facet" that he saw, displayed the "crystal of ambiguities." (p. 58) Confronted with the conflict of the living "unchristened" reality and the classical

education he had received, Gregorias advises Walcott,

> 'Man I ent care if they misunderstand me,
> I drink my rum, I praise my God, I mind my business!
> The thing is you love death and I love life.' (p. 129)

Unable to decide how to approach and live his life and his art he searches,

> ... the sea-wrack for a sea-coin:
> my white grandfather's face,
> I heard in the black howl of cannon,
> sea-agape,
> my black grandfather's voice. (p. 66)

As a child he sang "Hymns of battles not our own" but now strives to "make out of these foresters and fishermen/ heraldic men!" (p. 75) Like Césaire, he realizes that no one has written the living history of his people- "painter and poet walked/ the hot road, history-less." (p. 76) Unlike Césaire, Walcott does not ignore the large Chinese and Indian population of the Caribbean. These Asians were brought over as indentured labourers after the emancipation of the slaves and now share the economic lot of the mulattos and blacks:

> ... Beside the road,
> a beautiful, brown Indian
> girl in rags. Sheaves
> of brown rice held in brown,
> brittle hands, watching us
> with that earth-deep darkness
> in her gaze. She was
> the new Persephone,
> dazed, ignorant,
> waiting to be named.
>
> But we were orphans of the nineteenth century,
> sedulous to the morals of a style,
> we lived by another light,
> Victoria's orphans, bats in the banyan boughs. (p. 76-77)

The poet's ambivalence continued until one night the fire of Castries broke out, in whose blazing purge all racial and social distinctions were temporarily erased. In the smoldering rubble of shacks and mansions,

Walcott as a young man from a private school together with the people of the city in a common plight, found and recognized himself in his own community- "History was here." (p. 79)

The third chapter, "The Single Flame", describes the fire of Castries and his love for a nurse named Anna: "A love 'which hoped that their two bodies could be made' one body of immortal metaphor.'" (p. 94) But she knew, "that I found life within some novel's leaves/ more real than you, already chosen as his doomed heroine." (p. 96-97) Despite this confession of his inability to shed some of the influences of his schooling, he continued to struggle with this problem as the following satirical recollection of his reception as a young writer demonstrates:

> The accolade, the accolade.
> Tea with the British Council Representative,
> tannin, calfskin, gilt and thank you vellum much,
> of course you will soon shed your influences,
> silvery cadence measured, the eavesdropping coarse vegetation
> outside white jalousies, the indoor palms...
>
> I am hoisted on silvery chords upward,
> eager for the dropped names like sugar cubes.
> Eliot. Plop. Benjamin Britten. Klunk. Elgar. Slurp.
> Mrs. Winters's cheeks gleaming. Polished cherries.
> Lawn. Elegance. Remembering elms. England, then. When?(p. 106)

"The Estranging Sea", the final chapter, details his relationship with Harry Simmons, a painter who hoped to paint, "the vegetable excrement of natural life." (p. 119) With Harry's suicide, his estrangement from Gregorias and separation from Anna, Walcott now feels he has, "... no friends/ but the oldest, words." (p. 125) However, he has found his roots:

> think of the weight which
> the delicate blades of the fern endure
> the weight of the world, and
> everything else in its world that is not
> fern, yet it can be eased from
> earth by a fist, rainstorms richen its
> roots, what it takes from wind
> is hard to believe, but its sweat

gleams, it is chained in its own dew,
it is locked into earth, unlike the delicate
ribs of some men. Uprooted
they quail.

For here, what was success?
It was the mean, inner
excitement at having survived. (p. 125)

Both Harry and Gregorias suffered from the common lack of approbation and recognition of writers and artists in the Caribbean. Walcott lashes out, however, at an even greater evil:

all o' dem big boys, so, dem ministers,
ministers of culture, ministers of development,
the green blacks, and their old toms...
Who want a new art,
and their artists dying in the old way. (p. 127)

The popularization of the folk culture for tourist and political motives is no better than the selling of people into slavery,

they are hired like dogs to lick the sores of their people,
their vision blurs, their future is clouded with cataract,
but out of its mist, one man,
whom they will not recognise, emerges
and staggers towards his lineaments. (p. 128)

Mocking the anthropologists, the explorers and the geologists, he sees that in the natural environment, in their region, lies their common history, and his concern is with the present, the living reality:

You want to see my medals? Ask the stars.
You want to hear my history? Ask the sea. (p. 140)

...

a child without history, without knowledge of its pre-world,

...

... who puts the shell's howl to his ear,
hears nothing, hears everything...
... the fellaheen, the Madrasi, the Mandigo, the Ashanti,
yes, and hears also the echoing green fissures of Canton,

...

and the crossing of water has erased their memories.
And the sea, which is always the same,
accepts them. (p. 143)

Infuriated by the popularization of "black angst" (p. 145) and "the boring process of repatriation," (p. 146) he turns to the present rather than revive the past- a past history cannot be changed. But it can serve to inspire and give direction to the present. He offers a prayer of beatification to what IS, and asks the people of the island for forgiveness on the part of all Caribbean artists and writers who, caught forever in describing the processes of demystification and decolonization, have not turned to create the present. Those who:

> ... were blest with a virginal, unpainted world
> with Adam's task of giving things their names... (p. 152)

but have not fulfilled their task. The acquisition of this self-knowledge and call to action, this realization of a common present, was only made possible, however, by the exploration of a common past and its incumbent effects.

The Form as Identity:

> I was that muscle shouldering the grass
> through ordinary earth,
> commoner than water I sank to lose my name,
> this was my second birth.[15]

Walcott raises the question of style in his search for a West Indian identity. In an earlier poem entitled "Crusoe's Journal", he describes his struggle to find a native form this way:

> ... came our first book, our profane Genesis
> whose Adam speaks that prose
> which, blessing some-sea-rock, startles itself,
> with poetry's surprise,
> in a green world without metaphors;
> like Christopher he bears
> in speech mnemonic as a missionary's
> the Word to savages,
> its shape on earthen, water-bearing vessel's
> whose sprinkling alters us
> into good Fridays who recite his praise,
> parroting our master's
> style and voice, we make his language ours,
> converted cannibals
> we learn with him to eat the flesh of Christ.[16]

Here he is not entitled to "Adam's task of giving things their names", but good Friday's flattering praise! To avoid this "parroting" of English literature is part of his quest in Another Life. As he says in an earlier poem, "We learn to shape from them, where nothing was/ the language of a race."[17] But he realizes that "To change your language is to change your life", so "Schizophrenic, wrenched by two styles/ one a hack's hired prose, I earn/ my exile."[18]

These excerpts from earlier works reveal the problems confronting a native writer who attempts to express himself to, and out of, his people. Thematically speaking, rapid change is possible, as evidenced by the emergence of thematic West Indian verse after 1940, but the problem of the discovery of an indigenous style remains. The prevailing cultural ambivalence leads to this artistic ambivalence. Yet in struggling with an adopted literary heritage, and the need to express a native reality, Walcott creates out of his struggle a new form. A national literature is born. He realizes this important fact and writes:

> What makes the West Indies a complex challenge to the West Indian poet is the same thing that eventually wearies him: how to find his specific tone without being distant, how to invent natural forms. He suspects the raw spontaneity of dialect as being richer

> in expression, but is not willing to sacrifice the syntactical power of English. Naturally enough, where the conflict is realized the poetry is strongest. That dramatic ambivalence is part of what it means to be a West Indian now.[19]

Not content to be a "parroting" good Friday, Walcott in Another Life envisions himself as a second Adam, whose task it is to rechristen the earth. Avoiding the extremist approach of denying his literary heritage or hearkening after a mythical past, he wrote in 1970, "that what is needed is not new names for old things, or old names for old things, but the faith of using the old names anew..."[20] This creative use of "the old names" by Walcott, has led to critics[21] claiming him to be influenced by,the 17th century English poets, W.H. Auden, Stephen Spender, T.S. Eliot, W.B. Yeats, Hart Crane, the early Wallace Stevens, Dylan Thomas and the early Lowell. In his earlier poetry these influences are readily discernable as he admits his love for English literature: "... my first poems and plays expressed this yearning to be adopted, as the bastard longs for his father's household. I saw myself legitimately prolonging the mighty line of Marlowe, of Milton, but my sense of inheritance was stronger because it came from estrangement."[22]

This "awe" of English literature and history, his awe of "sienna and gold leaf" (Another Life, p. 44) and of

> ... a life older than geography
> as the leaves of edible roots opened their pages
> at the child's last lesson, Africa, heart-shaped,
>
> and the lost Arawak hieroglyphs and signs (p. 54)
>
> ...

had been fully developed in his earlier poems in a style that reflected the nature of each concern, while he struggled to find his own. His earlier poems reveal both his "awe" of his literary heritage, its authors and their

styles and his search for identity in their concerns.

In a poem from In a Green Night entitled, "Ruins of a Great House", the quotation from Donne forms an integral part of the dual-heritage experience Walcott is exploring--slavery and the decadent colonial empire, while at the same time demonstrating his love of English literature:

> ... My eyes burned from the ashen prose of Donne.
>
> Ablaze with rage I thought
> Some slave is rotting in this manorial lake,
> But still the coal of my compassion fought
> That Albion too was once
> A colony like ours,'part of the continent, piece of the main'
>
> Nook-shotten rook o'er blown, deranged
> By foaming channels and the vain expense
> Of bitter faction.[23]

In the same collection, "A Country Club Romance", a satire on intermarriage echoes Auden's modern ballads:

> Her breathless bosom rose
> as proud as Dunlop balls;
> She smelled of the fresh rose
> On which the white dew falls.[24]

His striving after perfection in his art is reflected in "Crusoe's Island"

> Art is profane and pagan
> The most it has revealed
> Is what a crippled Vulcan
> Beat on Achilles shield.
> By these blue, changing graves
> Fanned by the furnace blast
> Of heaven, may the mind
> Catch fire till it cleaves
> Its mould of clay at last.[25]

"A Far Cry from Africa" resembles a Shakespearean aphorism in its dramatic qualities:

> I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
> Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
> I who have cursed
> The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
> Between this Africa and the English tongue I love?
> Betray them both, or give back what they give?

How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live?[26]

These models were used by Walcott to ripen his own unique talent. In contrast to this, the style of Another Life is more direct and simple in its honesty and concern for his people and region as he strives to articulate his identity and, ultimately, theirs.

Gerald Moore in his The Chosen Tongue: English Writing in the Tropical World sees Walcott in "a process of shedding literary influences which might tie the language too closely to the misty northern island where it was first hammered into shape".[27] In the search for a form natural to his region and origins, this process of "exploration and purification"[28] is both developed and is resolved in Another Life. He explores his literary heritage and purifies his style through both his experience and the cultivation of a national consciousness. His poetry has become simpler, more direct, less geographical and more subjective, caught between the dialectic of metaphor and plainess. The lyricism and word coinage of Dylan Thomas is still evident but brought under stylistic control and descriptive economy. It is this style that reconciles his paradoxes and, while more original through the use of his personal experiences, is made more striking by its universally significant content.

"My poetry," he remarked "is getting worse in a sense that it is becoming terrifyingly plain to me and I am afraid that I am writing- well you know that I have a nostalgia, for obscurity in a way... This clarity is terrifying to me."[29] The development of this clear and natural style can be followed through Another Life. The second Adam lays bare the experiences and tools he struggled with to perceive his island as an island of origin, of rebirth and not of exile. In 1973 the task of the new Adam

is to give new names to things--to recreate a world.

While yet a child, his "explorations" led to the recognition of the flaws and incongruencies of life in relation to art, to history, to reality and of love to death. Castries, his "New Jerusalem for Coloured People Only" (Another Life, p. 21) was filled with "derelicts" (p. 22) contradicting the works of art and the heroic mythologies of the classical world that he loved. On a childhood epic journey through this "New Jerusalem" his descriptions echo the rhythm, realism and lyricism of Dylan Thomas' Under Milkwood. In the small village of Laraggub, Dylan's characters lyrically drift in and out of each others lives:

> ... Mrs. Ogmore-Pritchard, widow, twice of Mr. Ogmore, linoleum, retired, and Mr. Pritchard, failed bookmaker, who maddened by besoming, swabbing and scrubbing, the voice of the vacuum-cleaner and the fume of polish, ironically swallowed disinfectant, fidgets in her rinsed sleep, wakes in a dream,
>
> ...
>
> And before you let the sun in, mind it wipes its shoes.
>
> In Butcher Beynon's, Gossamer Beynon, daughter schoolteacher, dreaming deep, daintily ferrets under a fluttering hummock of chicken's feathers...
>
> ...
>
> And high above, in Salt Lake Farm, Mr. Utah Watkins counts all night, the wife-faced sheep...
>
> Knit one slip one
> Knit two together
> Pass the slipstitch over...
>
> Ocky Milkman...30

Walcott's characters while presented in the same lyrical form symbolize a defeated Trojan environment that recalls Césaire's "Rue Paille":

> Berthilia,
> the frog-like, crippled crone,
> a hump on her son's back, is carried
> to her straw mat, her day-long perch
> Cassandra with her drone unheeded.

Her son, Pierre, carries night-soil in buckets, (p. 17)

...

Gaga
the town's transvesite, housemaid's darling
is window shopping, swirling his plastic bag,
before his houseboy's roundtrip to Barbados,
most Greek of all, the love that hath no name, and (p. 18-19)

Helen?
Janie, the town's one clear-complexioned whore, (p. 19)

...

Vaughan
battling his itch, waits for the rumshop's
New Jerusalem, while Mister (p. 21)

Weekes,
slippered black grocer in gold-rimmed spectacles... (p. 21)

In school, Walcott

... saw history through the sea-washed eyes
of our choleric, ginger-haired headmaster,
beak like an inflamed hawk's,
a lonely Englishman who loved parades
sailing and Conrad's prose. (p. 70)

This classical education left him craving for the gold-tinged beauty of Renaissance art, its refinement and order:

Their haloes shone like the tin guards of lamps.
Verochio. Leonardo painted the kneeling angel's hair.
Kneeling in our plain chapel
I envied them their frescoes... (p. 23)

Yet he also yearned "for some ancestral, tribal country..." (p. 42) Walcott,

had entered the house of literature as a houseboy,
filched as the slum child stole,
as the young slave appropriated
those heirlooms temptingly left
with the Victorian homilies of Noli Tangere. (p. 77)

Even his love for Anna was shaped by this search for the glorious and the beautiful,

among them, Anna
profile of hammered gold,
head by Angelico
stars choiring in gold leaf. (p. 89)

In his adolescent apprenticeship to Gregorias the painter, he had

> ... hoped that both disciplines might
> by painful accretion cohere
> and finally ignite,
> but I lived in a different gift,
> its element metaphor,...
> my hand was crabbed by that style,
> this epoch, that school
> or the next,... (p. 58-59)

Gregorias possessed the style, the "aboriginal force." (p. 59) "Now, every landscape we entered/ was already signed with his name." (p. 59) Through Gregorias and Harry Simmons he realized that "to name" is to create and it was the painful articulation of that naming that formed Another Life. The development of that naming process through exploration and purification involved both self-mastery through a personal quest and self-expression through a style native to that search.

Gradually weaned away from "that school/ or the next," to Gregorias' and Harry Simmons' primitive and natural paintings, he confronts their resolution of the conflict between the living experience and art, in their paintings:

> Through the swift year
> the canvases multiply,
> brown-bottomed tumbling cherubim,
> broad-bladed breadfruit leaves
> surround his oval virgin
> under her ringing sky
> the primal vegetation... (p. 61)

> People entered his understanding
> like a wayside country church,
> they had built him themselves.
> It was they who had smoothed the wall
> of his clay-coloured forehead,
> who made of his rotundity an earthy useful object
> holding the clear water of their simple troubles,
> he who returned their tribal names
> to the, mattock, midden and cookingpot.
>
> A tang of white rum on the tongue of the mandolin,
> a young bay, parting its mouth,

a heron silently named or a night-moth,
or the names of villages plaited into one map... (p. 134)

As a young man exploring in the semmingly irreconciable domains of art and life, he was guided by these two whose art was never recognized.

Years later with the loss of Anna, suicide of Harry and separation from Gregorias, he alone is left "to name." Faced with the fact that nothing had changed over the years, that his island and the people had remained the same except for the modern tourist additions, he remembers,

it was I who first extended my hand
to nameless arthritic twigs,
and a bush would turn in the wind
with a toothless giggle, and
certain roots refused English.
But I was the one in awe. (p. 149)

Using the exprience gained from his explorations he now turns to the purification of his art. He remains true to his origins and surroundings and makes from "the Word" a "New Word":

... this new Word
was here, attainable
to my own hand,
in the deep country, it found the natural man. (p. 42)

His subjects--the rooted ferns, the people--are described in a native mixture of poetic metaphor and natural plainness, resulting in a clarity that while revealing the true nature of the Caribbean, captures it in poetic beauty:

The fishermen, like thieves, shake out their silver,
the lithe knives wriggle on the drying sand.
They go about their work,
their chronicler has gone about his work. (p. 133)

...

I watched the vowels curl from the tongue of the carpenter's plane,
resinous, fragrant
labials of our forests,
over the plain wood
the back crouched

the vine-muscled wrist,
like a man rowing,
sweat-fleck on blond cedar. (p. 74)

...

And the old woman who danced
with a spine like the "glory cedar,"
so lissome that her veins bulged evenly
upon the tightened drumskin of the earth... (p. 135)

The common people are given poetic significance and dignity but not to the extent that the paradox between the lush, paradisic landscape and the impoverished living conditions is resolved. For only socio-economic and political change could reconcile that paradox.

Go down to the shacks then,
like shattered staves
bound in old wire
at the hour
when the sun's wrist bleeds in
the basin of the sea,
and you will sense it,

or follow the path
of the caked piglet through
the sea-village midden,
past the repeated
detonations of spray,
where the death-rattle
gargles in the shale,
and the crab,
like a letter, slides
into its crevice,
and you may understand this,

smell the late, ineradicable reek
of stale rags like rivers... (p. 136)

His task for the future is "to name" the reality of the present:

Christ, to shake off these cerecloths,
to stride from the magnetic sphere of legends,
from the gigantic myth,
To change the marble sweat which pebbled
the wave-blow of stone brows
for this sweat drop on the cedar plank,
for a future without heroes,
to make out of these foresters and fishermen
heraldic men! (p. 75)

In this introspective "naming" process outlined in Another Life, he has articulated a direct style and language that while local in colour is universal in its concerns. It recognizes the struggle and enduring power of the people. His explorations into his native past and present, his purification of style in order "to name" for his people, have forged a unique Caribbean poetry, a means and living example for emerging national literatures. Walcott writes a hymn of praise to his island, reminiscent of Campbell's "Holy",

> holy is Rampanalgas and its high-circling hawks,
> holy are the rusted, tortured, rust-caked, blind almond trees,
> your great-grandfather's, and your father's torturing limbs,
> holy the small, almond-leaf-shadowed bridge
> by the small red shop, where everything smells of salt,
> and holiest the break of the blue sea below the trees,
> and the rock that takes blows on its back
> and is more rock,
> and the tireless hoarse anger of the waters
> by which I can walk calm, a renewed, exhausted man,
> balanced at its edge by the weight of two dear daughters. (p. 147)[31]

Not only does Another Life represent the final stage in the emergence of a national literature but the poems of both Walcott and Césaire in themselves dramatise the three movements of that development. Walcott's earlier poems are masterpieces of assimflation and reveal his love of his English literary heritage. The painful search for his own style and identity can be seen as a form of protest against this one-sided heritage. The quiet anguish of these poems absorbs the reader in his struggle and this form of protest is still present in Another Life.

Upon writing his Cahier d'un retour au pays natal in 1938, Césaire destroyed his earlier poems as they demonstrated his efforts to be an accepted French poet while denying his own past. His protest served to initiate the négritude movement but he has moved from that necessary stage to concern with his particular region, the Caribbean. Since 1961 he

has written only dramas concerned with the history of his people and the effects of colonialism. Although these two lyrical, very personal poems appear thirty-five years apart, in 1938 and 1973, and Césaire's Cahier marked the beginning of his literary career while the experienced Walcott's Another Life, the most profound focus on the Caribbean to-date, the time lag only served to sharpen their talent while allowing full development of each movement.

Césaire through his protest and insistence on the stature of the Negro, focused on the socio-political struggle necessary to bring his people out of their socio-economic and psychological bondage. The language of the Cahier is surrealistic, avoiding the propagandistic, didactic style usually associated with protest poetry. His later political involvement as a mayor and French deputy served to actualize his protest.

Walcott takes his personal experience as emblematic of a Caribbean national identity. He strives to attain self-mastery and identity through his personal quest. His mode of assertion serves as a corollary to Césaire's protest. Like Césaire he chose a liberated poetic form as the medium best suited to a deep, personal expression. While probing inward both reach out from the Caribbean to a wider audience.

These two modes of assertion, so seemingly different in purpose and style ultimately aim towards universalism--the restoration to themselves and all colonized individuals of their full potential as creative human beings. Neither stage is complete in itself but must continually interact-protest and identity--to forge a unique Caribbean character and literature. Both realize that without human love, without universal struggle and economic change their personal manifestations mean little. However, having recognized the dialectical relationship between literature and the inter-

acting forces determining a given society they continually attempt to fulfill what David Diop, another black writer postulates as the purpose of literature: "Literature is the expression of a reality in progress; it starts from reality, grasps it, takes what is in a blossoming state and helps it ripen."[32]

IV

Towards a Definition of a National Literature

The emergence of a national literature has heretofore been examined in view of its progression and development through the three stages of assimilation, protest, and national consciousness, a methodology not supported by more conservative critics.[1] The accepted standards for the defining of a national literature range from language, culture, geography and race to politics. All of these criteria come into conflict when one considers the world-wide use of the major languages and the literature of the emancipated European colonies and in particular that of the Caribbean. The expression of historical uniqueness in a colonial language seems a paradox in itself: "Since the seventeenth century, successive generations of writers have struggled to accomodate English to the expression of values, climates, landscapes and historical experiences quite different from those which originally shaped it: that is to say have been engaged in using English to define cultures not English, or no longer English."[2]

How does the preceeding examination of Caribbean poetry fare against these standard criteria? What is the determining factor by which to measure with some finality the poetry of the Caribbean, the birth of a national literature?

Most comparatists in defining a national literature would decide according to linguistic criteria as a more stable basis of judgement than cultural, geographical, racial or political factors. The 1964 Fribourg Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association met to study as one of its issues the problem of national literatures. T. Klanaiczay in his paper entitled, "Que faut-il entendre par littérature nationale?", considering the many factors involved, cites the specialists who contrary to his views have taken language as the determining factor: "La classification des littératures d'après les langues est indubitablement justifiée, l'identité d'une langue signifiant a priori une certaine solidarité et aboutissant à des résultats métriques, stylistiques et poétiques similaires."[3]

For the majority of Caribbean writers, English and French are the main languages and it is through these languages that they can best define themselves and their society. The African author has the choice between a non-European and European language, the latter being the language of his colonial education. The Caribbean writer, for whom English or French is not a second language, has a native dialect but these vary from island to island. In response to the Eurocentric contention that language equals nationality, Césaire defends his use of French as opposed to a native dialect: "Like it or not, I am a poet writing in French, and it is clear that French literature has influenced me. What I would stress however is the fact that taking French literature as a starting point, I have striven to create a new language, capable of expressing the African heritage. To put it another way, the French language was an instrument which I wished to endow with a new expressiveness. I wished to write a Caribbean French, a black French, which although French would bear a black seal."[4]

As an alternative to their imposed and inherited condition, many West Indian writers do use dialect and folk characters rather than Standard English or middle class characters. Dialect is often used in the description of intense experiences. However, to promote dialect and Creole as the only basis for a Caribbean national literature is reverse provincialism! Both Césaire and Walcott use dialect and folk characters in their plays which are meant for performance to a wider audience. The Word--the language--is that of the mother country but in its meaning and use is turned against her.

Sylvia Wynter taking the Prospero-Caliban relationship of Shakespeare's The Tempest, adapted by Césaire to the Caribbean situation, writes:

> Around the fire the Native took hold of the Word, And it was His Word in his own mouth, fired by his own dream. By making use of the Word... Caliban had initiated his first act of revolution against Prospero. He had appropriated Prospero's languages, as Prospero had appropriated his labour, thinking to appropriate his being. But his being survived and returned Prospero's language, changing forever its meaning. The cultural tradition out of which the West Indian, who is fed by the Caliban culture of the West Indies writes, is an inherently revolutionary one. That was always its intention.[5]

Both France and England still impose such patronizing, neo-colonialistic labels on the "approved" writing from their former colonies as, "les écrivains d'outre-mer" or "Commonwealth writers." This seems to be the common attitude of all European countries who held colonies. Again nationality is equated with language. Nevertheless, "...although Europe has tended to identify nationality with language, outside Europe nationality must often transcend language barriers in the making of new nations."[6] Walcott himself defends this latter position: "I would learn that every tribe hoards its culture as fiercely as its prejudices, that English literature,

even in the theatre, was hallowed ground and trespass, that colonial literatures could grow to ressemble it closely, but could never be considered its legitimate heir. There was folk poetry, colonial poetry, Commonwealth verse, etc., and their function as far as their mother country was concerned, was filial and tributary."[7]

George Lamming, a West Indian novelist, also disqualifies the Eurocentric attitude, that equates language and nationality:

> ... the English language does not belong to the Englishman. It belongs to a lot of people who do a lot of things with it; it is really a tree that has now grown innumerable branches, and you cannot any longer be alarmed by the size or quality of the branch...
>
> But one would have thought that by the end of the ineteenth century any serious critic of the English language would have stopped thinking that the language belonged to England. It stopped belonging to England a very long time ago.[8]

Jahnheinz Jahn in his History of Neo-African Literature[9] claims for the Caribbean certain stylistic elements deriving from the Negro-African tradition and subsequently labels it neo-African literature. Again this method of literary scholarship manifests a narrow view of Caribbean literature rather than the recognition of its multi-cultural heritage. A more challenging form of criticism is outlined by George Lamming, the West Indian novelist: "I am not so much concerned in what the West Indian writer has brought to the English language... A more important consideration is what the West Indian writer has brought to the West Indies."[10]

Klaniczay eliminates language as the sole determining factor, in the emergence of a national literature: "L'identité nette et simple que revèle la langue est insuffisante à englober ces créations littéraires dans la littérature nationale des Anglais ou des Français. Mais si l'on identifiait tout simplement le point de vue linguistique au point

de vue nationale la notion de littérature n'aurait aucun sens. Elle n'exprimerait qu'un pur pléonasme."[11]

Upon closer examination of the Caribbean language situation with its levels of dialect, Creole and standard French and English, "the INTERFERENCE phenomena"[12] resulting in a rearrangement of linguistic patterns have formed a Caribbeanized modification of the standard French and English, which is spoken but not openly approved in written form for lack of "purity." Furthermore, even those writers using only standard English and French, still borrow European formulas but the method of making changes is New World Negro.

Closely related to the question of language is that of culture, which is commonly assumed to be homogenous to the language of its expression. Frantz Fanon writes, "To speak a language is to take on a world, a culture."[13] But culture is not static or rigid but related to the actual life process of a society. It follows then, that the culture of the Caribbean is not strictly analogous to that of the former colonizer.

As demonstrated in the earlier poetry, the desire to emulate the whites and gain social status depended on the mastery of the cultural tool of language. It is therefore of the utmost importance for the development of a national culture that the literature of the Caribbean not be a transplanted one but promote its own Caribbeanized forms and language to all its citizens. For, "historical experience confirms that a language that remains the property of a small elite cannot provide the basis for a national culture."[14]

The absence of any overall linguistic unity among the islands, the colonial education system and their insularity hampers the development of a Caribbean culture. The common experience of colonialism has had a last-

ing effect on the psyche of the people: "... it has enshrined mediocrity, undermined self-respect and self-confidence, made the colonial unself-reliant and outward looking; and in sum has created the conditions that usher in neo-colonialism after Independence."[15]

Is there therefore a unique Caribbean culture? If so what is its basis? Edward Braithwaite provides an answer: "What one is asking is that the mind be left open for discussion of the possibility that the Caribbean, in spite of the operation upon it of 'the European system' in spite of indeed, because of, 'the peculiar circumstances' of its history, contains within itself a 'culture' different from though not exclusive of Europe."[16] Various studies supporting this "different" culture confirm its existence, as do Césaire and Walcott, on the basis of the interacting traditions, the ex-African base, the unity of all the islands through poverty, politics, and colour and the multi-racial Creole complex shared by the people of the Caribbean. Daniel Guérin writes, "Not withstanding their isolation and superficial dissimilarities, the West Indies have at least one indisputable patrimony in common: their miseries."[17]

It is the attainment of a racial and, above all, a historical consciousness fostered through protest poetry and the stress on the intrinsic stature of the Negro that opened up the development of an authentic, autochthonous Caribbean culture. The writers provided the catalyst and the necessary awareness: "A Caribbean culture only started to come into being when, as we shall see, a minority split away from the middle classes and made contact with the people, turned its attentions to their problems, studied their customs, their beliefs, what of the African inheritance the people have kept alive, and voiced the people's aspirations and anger."[18]

Therefore it was not from the writers and their middle class back-

grounds that the elements of a native culture emerged. It is rather "from the ranks of the working masses, less affected by European culture than the upper classes."[19] These peasants were more protected from the European colonization and have been somewhat insulated through social and economic deprivation and their concern with what Césaire called, "l'essence de toute chose"--(Cahier, p. 117) the essential integrity of life. This particular native, Caribbean sensibility was reaffirmed by Jacques Stephen Alexis, a Haitian novelist: "Our art tends to the exact sensuous representation of reality, to creative intuition, to character and expressive power."[20] This "exact sensuous representation of reality" is manifested in a sensitivity to the socio-historic reality of the people and Caribbean character. Daniel Guérin claims a distinct personality for these people: "Mais les Antilles françaises ne sont pas que françaises. Par un grand nombre de leurs traits (atavisme africain, passé esclavagiste, milieu tropical) elles ont une personalité propre, spécifiquement antillaise et qui les fait ressembler bien davantage à leurs consoeurs de la région caraibe qu'à lointaine et nordique métropole."[21]

A national literature can only grow out of a spirit of nationalism and a consciousness of one's present situation and person: "Discovery in the cultural sense comes with the realization that one is neither a rootless being devoid of identity, nor a lost son of Africa or Asia but a man made and shaped by this island now."[22] Cultural independance is essential for such discovery but is directly related to political and economic independance.

Other factors to consider are the geographical and racial features which form some basis of identity among the islands. The islands share the same climate, vegetation, agriculture, dress, the same survivals of folklore,

beliefs and magic with varied adaptations according to their African, Indian or Chinese past, and, due to miscegenation, a common Negroid base. The realization of these common regional factors will perhaps form the primary base for a future Caribbean federation. The political and economic insularity of each island have impeded both full cultural and political independance from the mother countries and their unity on a regional scale.

The use of political criteria as a basis of judgement is a somewhat hazy method, as the official policy and status of a country may differ from its implementation. The English-speaking islands have achieved official independence but the economic and political chattels have only changed ownership or been drawn into the American orbit. The difference between colonialism and neo-colonialism is negligible and the effect is worse culturally. The failure of the West Indies Federation was due to lack of economic parity among the islands and the fostering of local rather than regional nationalisms.

The French Antilles, hoping to gain greater parity and benefits, opted in 1946 for <u>département</u> status. Instead they received second-class status as "départements d'outre-mer" and an unequal application of metropolitan legislation. Césaire who had once urged departmentalisation called it, "politique de duperies et de tricherie."[23]

Although the promotion of a Caribbean language form, the revolutionary use of the standard language, the fostering of a native culture, of regionalism, of full economic and political independence have created a certain measure of "croyance en la nation", a historical awareness of the past, present and future is the final element necessary in the creation of a national literature. It is the history of the people that remains

as the final unifying and determining factor: "Une littérature nationale n'est donc pas soumise automatiquement à des facteurs linguistiques, géographiques-territoriaux ou politico-étatiques. Pour nous rapprocher de plus près de la solution, on doit considérer les littératures nationales comme des formations historiques spéciales et complexes, comme des phases très developées, dans l'evolution des diverses littéraires."[24]

The claims for the singularity of the people of the history of the Caribbean have been outlined heretofore, but is this history recognized by the Caribbean? Naipaul, a West Indian novelist wrote in 1961, "How can the history of this West Indian futility be written? The history of the islands can never be satisfactorily told. Brutality is not the only difficulty. History is built around achievement and nothing was created in the West Indies."[25] This is a negation totally different from Césaire's proud, "pour ceux qui n'ont jamais rien exploré."(Cahier, p. 117) Is it valid?

History is not fixed in place or time but is the continuation of man's attempt to fulfill his being. The negation of any part of a man's being demands not only protest but a rectification of identity. The people of the Caribbean have all at different stages in their past and together in the present endured the same suffering and exploitation-- a history and a living reality that neither barriers of language, race or insular island living can erase. This history of oppression among the blacks, mulattos, or Asians, whether as slaves or indentured labourers has a long and bitter past. It is their heritage of the Western world that has availed them of a linguistic strategy, a weapon whereby both to attack and wherein to express a national consciousness. It is the committed literature of the Caribbean that provides the cultural and

political awareness necessary to effect change. Only the full realization of their history and the promotion of their native literature by the people themselves will make Caribbean nationalism a political reality. Klaniczay concludes that: "La littérature est le résultat d'une longue évolution historique. Elle signale le haut dégré de perfection d'une littérature isolée dans une langue ou une région, de même que la phase de maturité de son histoire. Elle ne constitue donc pas un point de vue machinal et pratique servant à des classifications, elle ne se réduit pas non plus à n'être qu'un notion théorique: elle est une catégorie historique."[26]

Moreover, the realization of a common history and present requires a belief in the concept of nationhood itself. At the same Fribourg congress, Jean Weisberger in his, "Examen critique de la notion de nationalisme et de quelques problèmes qu'elle soulève en histoire littéraire", focuses on the problem inherent in the term itself--"Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?" Historians have defined the concept of a nation through a series of negative eliminations. "La nation, répètent-ils, ne s'identifie ni à la race, ni à la langue, ni à la conformité des coutûmes etc-, le résidu commun de leurs recherches se ramène au fonde à la seule idée de groupe."[27] Examining the above eliminations he comes to the conclusion that the concept of a nation is the result of a choice, a belief and common consent. "Elle fait partie intégrante du domaine où s'exerce la liberté."[28]

The poets of the Caribbean have made their choice and they continue to clarify and reiterate it. The people of the Caribbean need to be drawn together into this choice. At present, the literature of the Caribbean exhibits a national consciousness in all the required areas

of conservative critics. Now it must be activated by the people themselves, for the complete liberation of the cultural-economic-political triad will shape the final reality of a Caribbean Federation, the only possibility for mutual economic survival.

The poetry of the Caribbean is in itself an act of liberation and national consciousness. Walcott observed that "West Indian literature originated in verse."[29] It is not the mere gesture of supplanting in poetry one set of symbols qua symbols, by another that makes for an act of self-assertion. In combining the many factors of the Caribbean situation, Césaire and Walcott have created a poetry for their own people:

> For I think it is important that every people should have its own poetry, not simply for those who enjoy poetry- such people could always learn other languages and enjoy their poetry- but because it actually makes a difference to the society as a whole, and that means to people who do not enjoy poetry. I include even those who do not know the names of their own national poets...
>
> We observe that poetry differs from every other art in having a value for the people of the poet's race and language, which it can have for no other.[30]

The poetry of Césaire and Walcott is not readily available, known, or promoted in the Caribbean where the schools faithfully cling to the French and English traditional poetry.[31] The philistinism of the middle class towards their native writers, and the lack of publishing firms forces many writers overseas, where, losing contact with their people, they cannot form an active unified force in the development of a national literature. The poetry of Césaire and Walcott is not narrow, racist pamphleteering, but a search for origins, identity and a historical awareness of the existing reality, in order to interpret the present and build a new future. Césaire writes,

En bref et pour conclure, je pense que nous n'avons rien à gagner à nous enfermer, nous créateurs nègres, dans une esthétique dont en voit mal les attendus historiques; que c'est un singulier dérèglement de l'esprit que d'ériger en exigence de l'histoire (laquelle tout au contraire requiert de chaque époque qu'elle parle son propre langue) ce qui n'est à tout prendre que le goût très personnel de quelques-uns; que la dialectique d'une époque ne se ramène pas aux caprices, encore moins aux sautes d'humeur de quelque créateur privilegié; que de toute manière, nous sommes assez grands pour courir à nos risques et périls la grande aventure de la liberté; que notre poésie existe à ce prix: notre droit à l'initiative y compris notre droit à l'erreur. Je dis la poésie. Et la Révolution aussi.32

FOOTNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 Aimé Césaire, Cahier d'un retour au pays natal (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1971). The text of this edition is that of the 1956 edition and includes the introduction by Breton of the 1947 edition published by Bordas. The translation of the poem included in this 1971 edition is by Emile Snyder.

2 Derek Walcott, Another Life (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973).

3 Janheinz Jahn, A History of Neo-African Literature: Writing in Two Continents, trans. Oliver Coburn and Ursula Lehrburger (London: Faber, 1966).

4 Frantz Fanon, Wretched of the Earth, trans. Constance Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963).
Fanon and Jahn are both in agreement on the first level of an emerging national literature. Fanon calls it a period of assimilationist literature and Jahn, a period of apprenticeship literature. The second phase is seen by Fanon as one of recollection and of searching into the past. Jahn however, views it as a period of protest literature. When Fanon wrote the original Les Damnés de la terre in 1952, he foresaw the third stage as one of protest literature, revolutionary literature and national literature. Jahn does not discuss the possibility of a third stage per se but would label Caribbean literature as belonging to Neo-African literature rather than to the European language of its expression.

5 Fanon, p. 223.

6 Sylvia Wynter, "Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism," Jamaica Journal, 3, No. 1 (1970), pp. 27-42.

7 _____, "Let's Sit Down and Talk a Little Culture," Jamaica Journal, 2, No. 4 (1968), pp. 34-5.

CHAPTER I

1 Suzanne Césaire in Jacques Rolle, "Césaire et la négritude," Synthèses,

238 (March 1966), p. 219.

2 G.R. Coulthard, ed., Caribbean Litearture: An Anthology (London: University of London Press, 1966), p. 8.

3 Lilyan Kestleloot, Les Ecrivains noirs de langue française: La naissance d'une littérature (Bruxelles: Univ. de Bruxelles, 1965) p. 35.

4 O.R. Dathorne, ed., Caribbean Verse: An Anthology (London: Heineman, 1967), p. 2.

5 Arthur Drayton, "West Indian Consciousness in West Indian Verse," Journal of Commonwealth Literature 9 (1970), 71.

6 Kenneth Ramchand, The West Indian Novel and Its Background (London: Faber, 1970), p. 36.

7 Drayton, p. 78.

8 Ibid., p. 80.

9 Ibid., p. 73.

10 Ibid., p. 82.

11 Jack Corzani, "Guadeloupe et Martinique: La difficile voie de la négritude et d'Antillité," Présence Africaine, 76 (1970), 21-22.

12 Kestleloot, p. 39.

13 A.L. McLeod, ed., The Commonwealth Pen: An Introduction to the Literature of the Commonwealth (New York: Cornell Univ. Press 1961), p. 186

14 A.L. Hendriks and Cedric Lindo, The Independence Anthology of Jamaican Literature (Jamaica: Ministry of Development and Welfare, 1962), p. I.

15 The League's fondness for the English Romantic poets and in particular Wordsworth is evident in these two poems, the first J.E. Clare McFarlane's and the second Mr. Virtue's.

> And I have sought,
> Uneasy with thy hidden pain, the woods
> On summer nights, to listen to the leaves
> Whispering in solemn conclave, or to scan
> Their black and golden tracery, images
> And symbols of thine own mysterious fate,

Dark with forebodings, golden with lure
And promise of thy matchless loveliness;
And baffled, I have lifted searching eyes
Unto thymist-veiled mountains, where the peace
And majesty of heaven linger yet.
("My Country")

Parting my window to the light
That flooded up an April dawn
O, I beheld a vision bright
Upon a bough across a lawn-
A spider's jewelled filigree
Suspended 'twixt the sward and sky
All perfect in its symmetry
To catch to hold my raptured eye.
("The Web")

in R.J. Owens, "West Indian Poetry," Caribbean Quarterly, 7, No. 3 (1961), p. 120-1.

16 Hendriks and Lindo, Anthology, p. 134.

17 Louis James, ed., The Islands In Between: Essays on West Indian Literature (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 25.

18 Kestleloot, Les Ecrivains, p. 41.

19. Ibid., p. 39.

20 Ibid., p. 37.

21 Leconte de Lisle, "Midi," Twelve French Poets 1820-1900: An Anthology of 19th Century French Poetry, ed., Douglas Parmée (London: Longman's, 1957), p. 183.

22 Kestleloot, p. 42.

CHAPTER II

1 Jahnheinz Jahn, Muntu: An Outline of Neo-African Culture, Trans. Marjorie Grene (London: Faber, 1961), p. 235.

2 Norman Shapiro, Negritude: Black Poetry from Africa and the Caribbean (New York: October House Inc., 1970), p. 7.

3 George Lang, "Tradition and Change in Two African Poets" Thesis, (Edmonton: Univ. of Alberta, 1971).

4 S.O. Asein, "The "Protest" Tradition in West Indian Poetry: From George Campbell to Martin Carter," Jamaica Journal, 6, No. 2 (1973), p. 40.

5 Dathorne, Caribbean Verse, p. 107.

6 Hendriks and Lindo, p. 85.

7 After Garvey's death and the subsequent collapse of hopes for a United States of Africa, many turned their eyes to the Rastafarian cult, strongest in Jamaica. Their philosophy of peace, love and eventual salvation especially attracted the indigent and abandoned poor. Ras Tafari emerged as the true black god, long obscured from his children by the systematic lies of their white masters. Haile Selassie of Ethiopia, became the visible black leader and to whose country the blacks eventually hoped to migrate.

8 A. Derrick, "An Introduction to Caribbean Literature," Caribbean Quarterly, 15, Nos. 2 and 3 (1969), p. 66.

9 Drayton, "West Indian Consciousness," p. 84.

10 Richard Wright in Asein, p. 40.

11 Jean-Paul Sartre, Situations III (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), p. 233.

12 Césaire, Cahier, p. 26.

13 Aimé Césaire, Les Armes Miraculeuses (Paris: Gallimard, 1946), p. 133.

14 Césaire, Les Armes, p. 123.

15 Césaire, Cahier, p. 31.
Hoping to gain greater social security benefits the Martinique and Guadeloupe opted for département status in 1946. The result, however, was a worsening of social and economic conditions, as indicated by by the information that follows:
Les îles ont été dotées d'une sécurité sociale et d'un régime d'allocations familiales au rabais. En Martinique, une famille de six enfants touche environ, par mois, 10.000 fr. de prestations familiales, alors qu'en France elle a droit à une somme triple. En Guadeloupe, une famille de cinq enfants se voit allouer 7.530 fr., à Paris, 33.045 fr. Il n'existe pas d'allocations de chomage et, lorsque le chef de famille est sans travail, les allocations familiales sont supprimées.
Les salaires ont été l'objet d'une hausse considerable, mais ils restent, on le sait déjà, inférieurs de 17% à ceux des départements

metropolitains les plus chers, alors que depuis "départementalisation", le coût de vie dans les nouveaux départements est monté en flèche, au point d'être aujourd'hui supérieure de 65% à celui de la métropole. (See Daniel Guérin, Les Antilles décolonisées (Paris: Présence Africaine, 1956), p. 157.

16 Aimé Césaire in Helina Bobrowska-Skrodzka, "Aimé Césaire: Chanteur de Grandeur de l'Afrique," Présence Africaine, 59 (1966), 34-5.

17 "Entretien avec Aimé Césaire: Fort-de-France le 14 février, 1973," Cahiers Césairiens, 1 (1974), 5.

18 Aimé Césaire in Bolle, "Césaire et la négritude," p. 222.

19 Sartre, Situations, p. 262.

20 Leopold Senghor in Ellen Kennedy and Paulette J. Trout, "The Roots of Negritude," Africa Report, 11 (May 1966), p. 61.

21 Maurice Nadeau, Histoire du surréalisme: Documents surréalistes (Paris: Seuil, 1948), pp. 42-3.

22 Lilyan Kestleloot, Black Writers in French: A Literary History of Negritude, trans. Ellen Kennedy (Philadelphia: Temple Univ. Press, 1974), p. 255.

23 André Breton in Cahier, p. 17.

24 "Entretien avec Aimé Césaire," p. 5.

25 Sartre, Situations, p. 260.

26 According to African philosophy, nommo is the driving power which reproduces all things to life through the word. The muntu (man) participates in the life force (ngolo), and activates it through his nommo. "If there were no words, all forces would be frozen, there would be no procreation, no change, no life... The force, responsibility, and commitment of the word and the awareness that the word alone alters the world; these are the characteristics of African culture." in Jahn, Muntu, p. 133.

27 André Breton in Julien Levy, Surrealism (New York: Black Sun Press, 1936), p. 11.

28 "The value of the image depends upon the beauty of the spark obtained." in André Breton, Manifestos of Surrealism (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1969), p. 34.

29 Jean-Louis Bédouin, Vingt Ans de surréalisme: 1939-1959 (Paris: Denoel, 1961), p. 17.

30 Emile Snyder, "A Reading of Aimé Césaire's Return to My Native Land," L'Esprit Créateur, (Fall 1970), p. 120.

31 Gérard Durozoi, Le surréalisme: Théories, thèmes, techniques (Paris: Larousse, 1972), p. 97.

32 Kennedy and Trout, Roots, p. 61.

CHAPTER III

1 McLeod, Commonwealth Pen, p. 192
Mrs. Edna Manley is the wife of Norman Manley, the founder and leader of the People's National Party and who became its chief in 1955.

2 Ramchand, West Indian Novel, p. 71.

3 The problems of racial and social adjustment became all the more pressing during World War II when the Caribbean was brought into World affairs with the lend-lease agreements between Britain and the U.S.A. The influx of soldiers and the establishment of the military bases on the islands disturbed and awakened the people of the islands. (See p. 35 for the effects of the war on the French islands.)

4 West Indian dialect differs from Creole and patois. Pure Creole exists only in certain areas cut off from development- a mixture of colonial French and native African languages. It is therefore closely bound up with slavery and still carries those associations. Patois is found on some islands, such as Derek Walcott's St. Lucia, an island which changed hands between the English and the French fourteen times! Patois then, is a mixture of both broken English and French. West Indian dialect takes the central words from the equivalent standard English sentence and sets them in a rigid simplified sequence, omitting the abstruct, the passive tense and most of the finer rhetorical devices.

5 Louise Bennett, "In Reverse," Jamaica Independence Anthology, p. 226.

6 Evan Jones, "Lament of the Banana Man," Jamaica Independence Anthology, p. 107-8.

7 James, The Islands, p. 13.

8 Edward Jones, "Jour-vert", p. 14.

9 P.M. Sherlock, "Jamaica Fisherman," Jamaica Independence Anthology, p. 126.

10 A.L. Hendriks, "Road to Lacovia," Jamaica Independence Anthology, p. 97.

11 Adolphe Roberts, "The Maroon Girl," Jamaica Independence Anthology, p. 121.

12 George Lamming, "Caribbean Literature: The Black Rock of Africa," African Forum, 1, No. 4 (1966), p. 47.

13 Derek Walcott, "As John to Patmos," In a Green Night (London: Cape, 1962), p. 12.

14 O. R. Dathorne, "Africa in the Literature of the West Indies," Journal of Commonwealth Literature, No. 1 (Sept. 1965), p. 111.

15 Derek Walcott, "Hic Jacet," The Gulf and Other Poems (London: Cape, 1969), p. 71.

16 _____, "Crusoe's Journal," The Castaway and Other Poems (London: Cape, 1969), p. 51.

17 _____, "Codicil," The Castaway, p. 61.

18 Ibid., p. 61.

19 _____, "Some West Indian Poets," London Magazine, 5 (1965), 15.

20 _____, Dream on Monkey Mountain and Other Plays (London: Cape, 1972), p. 10.

21 R.J. Owens in his article entitled "West Indian Poetry," (see footnote 15) includes Walcott among those West Indian poets that "have no further idea of poetry than to produce jackdaw collections from other poets." (p. 121) Cameron King's and Louis James' essay, "In Solitude for Company: The Poetry of Derek Walcott" in James' The Islands in Between, is but an example of studies that pinpoint "English" influences or such factors as Walcott's evolution out of "Marvell and the metaphysicals." (p. 88) These critics among others, seem content to view West Indian literature as simply as extension of the English tradition.

22 Walcott, Dream on Monkey Mountain, p. 31.

23 _____, "Ruins of a Great House," In a Green Night, p. 19.

24 _____, "Country Club Romance," In a Green Night, p. 31.

25 _____, "Crusoe's Island," Selected Poems (New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux, 1964), p. 84.

26 _____, "A Far Cry from Africa," In a Green Night, p. 19

27 Gerald Moore, The Chosen Tongue: English Writing in the Tropical World (London: Longmans, 1969), p. 25.

28 Ibid., p. 25.

29 Dennis Scott, "Walcott on Walcott," Caribbean Quarterly, 14, Nos. 1 and 2 (1968), p. 78.

30 Dylan Thomas, Under Milk Wood: A Play for Voices (New York: New Directions Publishing Corporation, 1954), pp. 15-9.

31 George Campbell, "Holy", Jamaica Independence Anthology, p. 88.

Holy be the white head of a Negro.
Sacred be the black flax of a black child.
Holy be
The golden down
That will stream in the waves of the winds
And will thin like dispersing cloud.
Holy be
Heads of Chinese hair
Sea calm sea impersonal
Deep flowering of the mellow and traditional.
Heads of peoples fair
Bright shimmering from the riches of their species;
Heads of Indians
With feeling of distance and space and dusk:
Heads of wheaten gold,
Heads of peoples dark
So strong so original:
All of the earth and the sun!

32 Lilyan Kesteloot, Intellectual Origins of the African Revolution (Washington: Black Orpheus Press, 1970).

CHAPTER IV

1 Among comparatists themselves, there exists a broad spectrum of opinion

on the question of the definition of a national literature. Ulrich Weisstein, Wellek and Warren, Van Tieghem, Stallknecht and Frenz and Corstius are among those who define it according to criteria other than historical.

2 Moore, Chosen Tongue, p. IX.

3 T. Klaniczay, "Que faut-il entendre par littérature nationale?" Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Assoc.,ed., F. Jost, Fribourg, 1964 (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1966), p. 187.

4 E.A. Hurley, "Commitment and Communication in Césaire's Poetry," Black Images, 2 (1973), p. 12.

5 Wynter, "Let's Sit Down and Talk a Little Culture," p. 28.

6 G.E. Perren and Michael I. Holloway, Language and Communication in the Commonwealth (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1965), p. 4.

7 Walcott, Dream on Monkey Mountain, p. 31.

8 George Lamming in Ian Munro, Reinhard Sander, Dean Beebe, "Writing and Publishing in the West Indies: An Interview With George Lamming," World Literature in English Newsletter, No. 19 (1971), p. 21.

9 Jahnheinz Jahn, A History of Neo-African Literature.
These neo-African stylistic elements are found, in the imperative style, intensification through repitition, the transformation of the image into new, living images through the power of the nommo and the responsibility of the word.

10 George Lamming in Wynter,"Reflections on West Indian Writing and Criticism," p. 39.

11 Klaniczay, p. 188.

12 Uriel Weinrich, Languages in Contact: Findings and Problems (New York: Columbia Univ., 1953), p. 1.

13 Frantz Fanon, Black Faces, White Masks, trans. Charles Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967), p. 38.

14 Moore, p. XI.

15 Arthur Drayton, "The European Factor in the West Indies," Literary Half-Yearly, 2, No. 1 (1970), p. 74.

16 Edward Braithwaite, "The Islands In Between: Reflections on West Indian Literature," Southern Review, 3, No. 3 (1969), p. 265.

17 Daniel Guérin, The West Indies and Their Future (London: Dobson, 1961), p. 17.

18 Ibid.,p. 80.

19 Ibid., p. 100.

20 Jacques Stephan Alexis in Coulthard, Anthology, p. 12.

21 Guérin, p. 154.

22 Moore, Chosen Tongue, p. 3.

23 Daniel Guérin, Les Antilles décolonisées (Paris: Presence Africaine, 1956), p. 157.

24 Klaniczay, "Que faut-il entendre par littérature nationale?" p. 188.

25 Moore, p. 7.

26 Klaniczay, p. 192.

27 Jean Weisberger, "Examen critique de la notion de nationalisme et de quelques problèmes qu'elle soulève en histoire littéraire," Proceedings of the Fourth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Assoc. ed., F. Jost, Fribourg, 1964 (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1966), p.219.

28 Ibid., p. 221.

29 Walcott, "Some West Indian Poets," p. 31.

30 T.S. Eliot, On Poetry and Poets (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy, 1957), p. 7.

31 Mervyn Morris, "Walcott and the Audience for Poetry," Caribbean Quarterly, 14, Nos. 1 and 2 (1968), pp. 7-24.

32 Aimé Césaire, "Sur la poésie nationale," Présence Africaine, 4 (1955), p. 41.

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